KETCHES OF CHARACTER,

OR

SPECIMENS OF REAL LIFE.

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

" Fictions, to please, must wear the face of Truth."
Qui capit ille facit.

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SKETCHES OF CHARACTER,

OR

SPECIMENS OF REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LODGING-HOUSE.

MRS. LOVELL frequently reflected with tender anxiety on the present situation and future prospects of her adopted child, and though she had the satisfaction of knowing that Emily had many friends, yet she also knew, she was without a natural right to claim protection from any individual.

Several months had elapsed since their removal to London, and the continual gaiety of which Emily partook, made Mrs. Lovell apprehensive that she might imbibe a greater relish for high life, than was compatible with her future expectations.

During childhood, difference of rank is not much regarded, and Emily and the Miss Dorringtons had shared the same pleasures; but that season was now passed.—The Miss Dorringtons were by birth entitled to hold a rank in society to which Emily could not pretend; and Mrs. Lovell considered, that if Emily continued to reside with them, she must appear in the mortifying character of an humble friend. As the young ladies grew up, these reflections had often obtruded themselves on Mrs. Lovell's mind: since her coming to London, she had been very desirous of residing in a more retired sphere, and the liberality of Mr. Dorrington enabled her to arrange a plan calculated to afford every comfort.

Before Mrs. Lovell spoke on the subject to Mrs. Dorrington, she opened her mind to Emily, and in as delicate a manner as possible, urged the propriety of the measure.—Emily felt humbled; but it was more from the cause which required the step, than the plan itself; and though it would not afford her all the luxuries and gaiety to which she had

had been accustomed, she would feel the respectability of having a home.

Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington at first opposed the scheme, but Mrs. Lovell so ably supported her opinion, that upon mature deliberation they acknowledged the propriety of her determination.

Mrs. Lovell engaged pleasant lodgings in Adam Street; and the day at length arrived for Emily's leaving a family to which she had been so long endeared.

The contrast between the magnificence of Mr. Dorrington's house, and the economical furniture of Emily's new residence, was not calculated to reconcile her to the change.

The lodging-house was kept by Mr. Hudson, an infirm old man, and an unmarried daughter, in her fortieth year, who with a domineering spirit ruled the house in such a manner, that her father seemed to be obliged to consider himself indebted to her for protection, when in reality, Miss Hudson had no property independent of him, except

what strict economy had enabled her to save.

It was now upwards of fifteen years since Miss Hudson had kept a lodging-house, and during that time, her apartments had been frequently let to old bachelors and widowers; and as some of them, for the sake of society, had now and then taken their tea with Miss Hudson, she flattered herself she should one day be fortunate enough to convert her lodger into a husband: hitherto, however, she had been unsuccessful, but as hope was still her friend, she continued to set herself off to the best advantage, and as it was good policy, in pursuing her plan, to appear good-tempered, and shew a desire of pleasing her lodgers, she had undeservedly acquired the character which had recommended her to Mrs. Lovell.

In following up her matrimonial scheme, she had not overlooked the importance of dress, and to support her extravagance in that way, she became very frugal in every other: she made strict terms with her lodgers;

lodgers; was very attentive to prevent waste; and constantly kept her provisions under lock and key: the more she found her account in this system of economy, the more inclined she was to pursue it; especially as she calculated, that by this means she might be able to treasure up a little fortune, which would considerably enhance the value of her personal charms.

It might be supposed that Miss Hudson's character would soon be known, and her house deserted; but the situation being pleasant, she had frequent applications for her apartments; and as she was plausible in her manners, and affected to be so ready to oblige, she was seldom without lodgers, though she experienced a continual change; for it was soon discovered that her civilities were hollow and interested.

Miss Hudson officiously tendered her services to Mrs. Lovell on many unnecessary occasions; but on her offering to purchase every thing for her table, Mrs. Lovell was really obliged to her for taking the trouble off her hands, though she was continually

teazed by the over exactness of Miss Hudson, who never thinking of buying any article for herself when it happened to be dearer than usual, made a scruple of conscience of doing as she would be done by.

Mrs. Lovell soon discovered from her own observations and the representations of her servant, that Miss Hudson's exactness was the consequence of extreme parsimony; and happening to hear her voice scolding some person in rather a high key, she found, upon enquiring the cause, a further proof of her disposition.

Mary began, "Oh dear heart, ma'am, 'twas too bad—she was haranguing her poor old father, because, ma'am, he had meat for his luncheon, ma'am—'twas a'most a bare bone too; I never met with such a stingy creature—and so ugly as she is—I'm sure I pray she may never come across my sight at meal times, for the very sight of her large unwholesome cheeks is enough to turn one's stomach."

"Her looks she can't help," said Mrs. Lovell.

"No

"No sure, ma'am; no more can I, nor none of us—but temper one can—and then she pretends to be so young, ma'am; why she's eight and forty if she's a minute; and I'm sure, ma'am, it makes my heart bleed to see how she treats her old father, ma'am—why ma'am, her temper's so, that they can't live together in peace—and so, ma'am, though, as you see, one roof kivers 'em both, they live as far from each other as they well can in one house; for he always dines in a little hole of a closet, down stairs, and she in the garret, ma'am; 'tis as true as I stand here; 'tis enough to wear the drudge out; for every thing as the old girl wants, pepper, mustard, and vinegar, or what not, up and down, five story high, ma'am, that poor drudge must go; and she's hardly allowed enough to eat, ma'am—poor thing—oh, 'tis enough to kill her," continued Mary, leaving the room, as she perceived by Mrs. Lovell's manner, that she discouraged any farther communication, but taking advantage of the entrance of a third person, in the figure of a meagre cat, she availed her-

herself of the circumstance, to renew her invective against Miss Hudson.

"And o'ny look here, ma'am, here's a living moniment of her niggardness."

"Poor creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovell, "it seems half starved."

"Oh dear, iss sure, ma'am, poor dumb animal, didn't I tell you how 'twas fed, ma'am?—dear sure, I thought I had—why you know, ma'am, the lady in the pa'lour keeps a parrot, and so, ma'am, Miss Hudson was very angry, and said 'twa'n't fit to keep birds in a pa'lour, dirtying her carpet, and desired Mrs. Willoughby to send her parrot away—but no sure, Mrs. Willoughby said her parrot should stay, or she would go too—and so Miss Hudson didn't know then what to say or do; the next day she was in the kitchen when Mrs. Willoughby's maid came in to clean out the cage, and there, ma'am, as the crumbs and bird's victuals, and all, fell upon the floor, this poor dear cat, ma'am, run to 'em and fed upon 'em—'tis as true as I stand here, and I'm sure it made my heart bleed to see it, for a cat don't like bread and

and such like; but from that day, ma'am, Miss Hudson never says a word about sending away the parrot, because, you see ma'am, the crumbs saves feeding the cat—oh, she's as stingy as old Hellways, the miser."

"I hope Mary your compassion for the poor creature's sufferings, prompted you to afford it relief—pray give it some meat directly, and mind to feed it every day—poor puss will not feel much inclined to give you credit for a bleeding heart, unless she receives some proof that the stream flows for her benefit."

Mary understood nothing further from this reproof, than a direction to see the cat fed, and left the room just as Miss Hudson entered it: she was going to market, and Mrs. Lovell, having given her a few directions went out soon afterwards, to call on a friend in the neighbourhood.

Emily had that morning been paying a visit to the Miss Dorringtons and was returning home, when she was overtaken by Mr. Temple.

"How fortunate!" cried he, "I have not

been

been in London twelve hours, before a lucky chance procures me the pleasure of meeting you — I return to Oxford in a day or two, and shall be happy to be entrusted with any commands to Sir William."

"'Tis fortunate indeed," said Emily, "I have begun a letter—but—I have it not with me—and I am at a loss how to send it to you, where do you lodge?"

"I am at Stevens's, in Bond-Street."

"I can't well send it there — I must deliver it to you myself, and if—" continued Emily, while a blush tinged her cheek, springing from the conviction of the impropriety of the request she was going to make, "if it be not giving you too much trouble, I would ask you to meet me to morrow."

Mr. Temple readily agreed, and was taking leave as they reached Emily's home: the door was opened by Mary, who informed her that Mrs. Lovell was out.

It immediately occurred to Emily, that by delivering her letter immediately to Mr. Temple, she would be relieved from the

pain-

painful necessity of framing a deceitful excuse for going out the next day.

Mr. Temple followed her to the drawing-room, where she left him, while she ran to her room for her letter; she was back in an instant, and sitting down, hastened to make an affectionate conclusion.

Miss Hudson was just returned from market, and finding a gentleman had come in with Miss O'Connor, her curiosity was excited, and for want of a better excuse to discover what sort of a visitor he was, she popt her head into the room, saying, "I could get no salmon, miss, and the cod-fish is very dear, and the—"

"Indeed Miss Hudson," cried Emily, mortified that Mr. Temple should witness intrusion, arising from the domestic economy of their establishment—"indeed you must use your own discretion."

"I could get a very tidy pair of soles for three shillings, and I went as far as fiffenpence for a skate, but—"

"I cannot attend to these matters," said Emily.

"Very well, ma'am," replied Miss Hudson, drawing the door slowly after her, then quickly opening it again, cried, "Do Mrs. Lovell and you Miss like mackerel? for there are very fine ones, and I can get 'em at—"

"Pray wait till Mrs. Lovell returns," said Emily impatiently.

"But p'raps she'll stay out a long time Miss—and 'tis now past two," continued Miss Hudson, lingering in the room under pretence of putting a chair in its place, but in reality to have a nearer inspection of Mr. Temple, "I believe I'd best buy the mackerel then—"

"Pray buy what you think proper."

"Half a dozen will be enough, I s'pose, or less, 'cause there is a bit of the cold mutton left—you didn't hear whether Mrs, Lovell meant to have it hash'd, but I s'pose not—Well, I'll go for the mackerel."

"She is the most provoking, officious creature in the world," said Emily, lighting a wax taper and sealing her letter; "so careful lest we should be extravagant—"

Emily

Emily then delivered her letter to Mr. Temple, who promised to take the greatest care of it—she followed him to the top of the stairs—her mind was considerably agitated—she felt, deviating from a line of conduct which female delicacy should ever maintain—the idea of a clandestine correspondence humbled her pride—her letter too, she was dissatisfied with—she had begun it without being certain she should be able to convey it, and now recollected two or three parts she wished to have altered; but it was too late—Mr. Temple hastened away, leaving Emily in a most uncomfortable state of mind.

She felt she had done that, which she could not acknowledge to Mrs. Lovell; yet wished it not undone: she rejoiced at the opportunity she found for sending her letter, yet regretted that she was obliged to send it unrevised.

Her mind was distracted too, with the idea of William's going abroad: he had not indeed hinted at it, himself, nor had she referred to the report in her letter, but she had

had learnt from Temple that William had a continental tour in contemplation.

Emily dreaded a separation from one so dear to her soul, and her busy fancy pictured every hateful interruption to their happiness, which his more extensive intercourse with the world might occasion.

Their attachment had commenced almost in infancy, and had, by imperceptible gradations, grown into the noblest passion implanted in the human breast; yet no further or more explicit declaration had passed between them, than such expressions of reciprocal affection as their long attachment had made familiar.

It was now however that Emily began to reflect with seriousness on her situation — while children, no inequality appeared between them; now, she was to feel, that in the nice calculating eye of the world, all the advantages were on his side — she was well aware that officious friends were ever ready to give inexperienced youth advice, but consoled herself in the persuasion, that William's unprejudiced mind would triumph over

over the interested whisperings of worldly monitors; yet again her spirits sank at the prospect of his leaving England—again she tortured her imagination with ideal misery.

From these irksome reflections, she was diverted by the approaching nuptials of Lucy Dorrington and Lord Faulkner: Emily was to be one of the bride-maids, and Mrs. Dorrington called to take her and Mrs. Lovell to Cavendish-square to attend the ceremony, and as Miss Dorrington accompanied the young couple to Wycombe, his lordship's seat in Somersetshire, Henrietta insisted on Emily's continuing with her.

The Dorringtons had been detained in town much longer than usual, by the preparations for the wedding, and now intended to set off in a few days for Compton Stoke.

A rout at the Duchess of Ulverstone's was the last party they went to: Emily accompanied them, and excited no small portion of envy, by the attentions paid her by Lord Starford, a noted admirer of beauty, who piqued himself upon the success of his insinuating manners.

This

This nobleman was a man of the first fashion—his age about forty, yet his figure and style of features gave him the appearance of being younger. He was handsome, but a dissipated life and free living had stamped his countenance with an air of libertinism. His polished address, rank, fortune, and consequence, insured him a favourable reception from all quarters. Many had been the snares laid for his alliance; he had amused himself with the baits, but laughed at matrimony. It had been however lately whispered that his lordship had serious thoughts of marrying: various conjectures were formed respecting his choice, and new attacks were preparing, when the lovely Emily caught his eye. She was then indifferent to his eager admiration, but she had since learnt what it was to feel unimportant: when Emily was first seen in London, her beauty had gained her considerable notice, but as by degrees, she became talked of as a person of no family, her importance dwindled away. Men of fashion who had sought an introduction, now, with a cold bow, passed on to

pay

pay their devoirs to some rich heiress or titled beauty: the ladies too, had not been behind hand in letting her see, that beauty, without rank or fortune, was of little consequence: Emily felt all this, and not being aware of Lord Starfort's character, was gratified by his attentions, though she took care he should understand she considered them in no other light than as the polite *badinage* of a man of fashion.

While the marked attention of Lord Starfort, thus afforded Emily a triumph over her envious rivals, Mr. Temple entered the room with his relation, Colonel Cochrane: they drew near a table where a friend of the colonel's was at cards, and as they stood looking on at the game, Temple's attention was attracted by some observations made by a party near him.

"Miss O'Connor and Lord Starfort, I see, continue their flirtations," remarked Lady Charlotte Adair.

"He's despeyately in love with her, and I appewve his choice; she's a bootiful keature."

"She

"She has given his lordship great encouragement ——"

"Oh, yes, and I understand," said Miss Adair, "it's a settled thing."

"She looks lovely to-night," observed Lady Hillingdon.

"Her yival's not here you know."

"Do you mean Miss Aucherly?" said Lady Charlotte Adair, in a loud tone.

The name of Aucherly reached Emily's ear, and forgetting that Lord Starfort was speaking to her, she endeavoured to catch what followed.

"How dreadful for Miss Aucherly to be immured in the country; I'm told her ladyship does not intend coming to town during her widowhood."

"'Twill be terrible for her," cried Lady Charlotte, "what a *very* fine young man Sir William is — such an elegant figure!"

"I understand he's going abroad very soon," said Lady Hillingdon.

"Yes, he is," cried Mrs. Monckton, who was at cards near them, "a friend of mine told

told me — Good G—d, I forgot the knave was in!"

"He's in town, I hear," said the Marquis of Haughton.

"Yes," said Mrs. Monckton, turning from her cards, "I saw him this morning — Lady Garston, you've misdealt — he's going — I have but twelve cards ma'am — he's going abroad immediately."

Lord Starfort's remarks were thrown away on Emily — in vain he repeated, "don't you think so?" — "ar'n't you of my opinion?" Emily's ear was rivetted to the conversation near her.

Temple had observed her; and concluding she was listening to the adulation of Lord Starfort, was at a loss how to reconcile it with her love for William; he was unwilling to give implicit credit to what he had overheard, yet circumstances seemed to countenance it; her conduct was enigmatical to him, and half suspecting that Emily was playing a double part, he left the house, considering in what manner he should break the painful communication to his friend, or

whether

whether he ought not entirely to suppress it; but at length concluded, it was best to keep what he had seen, to himself, till more assured that there were just grounds for his suspicions.

Emily's heart felt a severe pang at the intelligence she had just heard, and hastily making some inapplicable replies to Lord Starfort, again directed her attention to the party before her, eager to learn further tidings of William; but they had dropt the subject, and were now giving their sentiments on Mrs. York's *fête*.

"Every thing was so whimsical," cried Miss Adair, "and such manifest anxiety to be out of the common."

"They certainly aimed at too much for one evening," said Lady Hillingdon, "the succession of amusements was quite confusing."

"'Twas very badly managed," observed Mrs. Monckton.

"Oh, what you're talking about the mummery at Villa Yorke," said the Marchioness of Arrangford, sitting down with them,

them, to enjoy a laugh, "I never was so well amused."

"What did you think of the tragedy?"

"*Comedy* you mean," exclaimed the marchioness; "I thought I must have expired with laughter, till Miss Yorke kill'd herself—she came down with such force, that the whole building shook."

"I must own," said Miss Adair, "'twas rather alarming."

"I thought," cried Mrs. Monckton, "she would have gone through the stage—do you trump my king, sir?"

"She fell down like a horse," continued the marchioness, "and with such a noise, I thought the roof was falling in upon us—I never was so frighten'd—'twas I that screamed, and that made Lady Cecilia Bentley shriek."

"Ah, you behaved very ill," observed Mrs. Monckton, "Major Lenox, the cards are not cut—but to be sure Miss Yorke was *too* absurd—'tis Lady Garston's deal—and the men were so imperfect in their parts."

"Oh,

"Oh, Miss Yorke," cried Lady Charlotte, "was obliged to prompt Sir Cæsar every minute."

"He must however, have taken great pains with himself," said Lady Hillingdon, "for he pronounced the R to admiration."

"But how ridiculously he was dressed," rejoined the marchioness, "and as for Mrs. Yorke, I thought she would have fainted under the load of black velvet she had on,—it must have been a pall."

"We ought to be all very much obliged to her," said Lady Hillingdon, "for undergoing so much fatigue for our amusement."

"Oh, but then, 'twas all her own fault," cried the marchioness, "she was so anxious to surprise us with her vehement sorrow; poor woman, she was obliged to lie down, after 'twas over, and the people all seem'd so thankful when the curtain dropt."

"And so glad to begin dancing," observed Miss Adair.

"And it's diverting," continued the marchioness, "to watch how different people dance; there's Miss Purvis, an exact representation

sentation of one of Merlin's mechanical figures; she has but five movements, and can scarcely sit down, she's so tightly laced with the long stays—then Miss Fortescue skips about kicking every body's shins, and Lady Jane and Lady Helen St. Clair rush down the dance with their chins foremost, as if they were overtaking a thief."

"You're too bad," said Lady Hillingdon, "I've a great mind to tell them."

"Oh, I beg your ladyship's pardon; I forgot your family connexion—Mrs. Monckton, do you go on at that table?"

"No, I've play'd quite enough—and my carriage has been announced this half hour. I lost my first game by watching Lord Starfort and Miss O'Connor."

"Oh, 'tis really too bad," said Lady Grey and Greville, rising from the table, "I never witnessed such bare-faced behaviour in my life."

"And with such a libertine character," cried the marchioness, "I'm sure I sha'n't be surprised to hear of their being upon still better terms: but I don't blame him; she

seemed

seemed to invite his overtures in good earnest.

Emily heard not the malicious insinuations of the marchioness; she had been returned home some time, having heard enough to raise a thousand fears — William Aucherly was in London, and on the point of going abroad.

Had Emily seen Mr. Temple at the duchess's, he would have informed her that William had only arrived that morning; that instead of going at once to Aucherly Park, he had come to town on purpose to see her, and that at present, he had no intention of leaving England; but Emily had been wholly absorbed by what she had overheard, and Temple was too much perplexed to force himself into her notice. On his return to Stevens's, he found William had been gone to bed some time; but when they met at breakfast, William enquired where he had been the preceding evening.

"I dined you know at the Cochranes' — and they insisted on my going with them

them to a rout at the Duchess of Ulverstone's."

"Was it a gay affair?"

"A very large party."

"Were the Dorringtons there?"

"Yes."

"And Emily? — How did she look?"

"Lovely."

"Did you tell her I was in town?"

"I — I — it happen'd, a — I had not an opportunity of speaking to her —"

"How! what, didn't she see you, or did you not take pains to —"

"I believe she did not see me."

"But you could surely have managed to have —"

"Indeed, William," said Temple, who perceived his friend appeared hurt at his supposed indifference, "you do me injustice if you suspect I was inattentive to your wishes, but —"

"Whom was she with then?" interrupted William.

"I had resolved not to tell you — but perhaps you cannot too soon learn that Lord

Lord Starfort is said to be paying his addresses to her."

"Good G–d!" exclaimed William, "did *he* engross her then?—how did she receive him—was she in spirits—did she appear happy?"

"Nay, do not lay too great a stress upon what I have said—let not an idle report make you miserable—come finish your breakfast, it's almost twelve. You mean to call on the Dorringtons, don't you? You will then see Emily—and—"

"I will not believe it—Emily cannot be so lost—so—Charles tell me every particular of what you heard."

William listened attentively; now treated the report as groundless, now trembled at each shadow of probability that accompanied it.

Soon afterwards he walked out with Temple, and as they were strolling along Piccadilly, William perceived Mrs. Dorrington's carriage waiting at a fashionable warehouse.

"Look," said he, pointing it out to Temple, "perhaps Emily is in it. I know not

not whether to pass it or not—I am not sufficiently composed to meet her."

While he was thus considering, Mrs. Dorrington came out of the shop, followed by Henrietta and Emily, attended by Lord Starfort, who handed them into the carriage, and familiarly bowing, joined two or three loungers at the corner of Bond-street who had been waiting for him.

"Who was that?" enquired William.

"Cannot you guess."

"Do not, Charles, torture me with this suspence—*was* it Lord Starfort?—now then I know my fate—"

"Come, come, do not despair—"

"Nay but she smiled as he waved his hand."

"At his folly perhaps."

"Yet she did not seem in spirits—there was a languor over her countenance—Oh Emily!"

"My good friend, you're too serious; you must not condemn her on grounds so slight."

"Well, I will not be precipitate—if you

 hear

hear more of this affair after I leave town, I shall depend on hearing from you."

William now reverted to Emily's letter, every word of which he could remember: he analyzed every sentence; thought one expression cold; another somewhat ambiguous, and altogether very unsatisfactory; but unwilling to form a hasty judgment against her, on vague conjecture only, and persuaded that one interview would decide his doubts, he was impatient to meet her, and determined to call at Mrs. Dorrington's, as soon as he conceived they were returned home. In the mean time, recollecting he was very near Mr. Mansell's residence, he proposed paying him a visit.

He found Mrs. Mansell in the drawing-room with a young lady.

"Now this is very kind, Sir William, and so neighbourly like — and so you're going to see Lady Aucherly are you — well that will be very pleasant — and we are going to Myrtle Vale in a day or two; and Miss Fortescue — give me leave Sir William, to introduce Miss Fortescue, sister to my cousin

cousin Lady Westenra — she is to go with me; I suppose our neighbours the Dorringtons will be at Compton Stoke soon, but they are first going to pay a visit at Lord Camleigh's, near Blandford, — and you've heard all about Miss O'Connor and Lord Starfort I suppose?"

"What ma'am — I — "

"What haven't you heard then? Law, why '*tis* to be."

"I hear they are engaged," said Miss Fortescue, "a friend of mine, heard the subject mentioned before Mrs. Dorrington, and she did not contradict it — and last night, at the Duchess of Ulverstone's, they sat together the whole evening: every body said they were arranging their establishment."

"'Tis said, she's to have a jointure of three thousand a year," said Mrs. Mansell, "and that the most beautiful diamonds are — "

"Oh I fancy it's a settled thing — the Morning Post I see," added Miss Fortescue, with a glance at a paper on the table, "speaks of it without reserve — here it is

'We hear Lord S——t, who has so long withstood the siege of female beauty, has at length surrendered to the charms of the lovely protegée of the Hon. Mrs. D——n, and is shortly to receive her fair hand at the Hymeneal altar' — there can be no mistake in the parties."

"Oh law no, 'tis certainly true."

William affected a gaiety which sat but awkwardly upon him, "It's rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Law! I shou'dn't have touch'd upon it, shou'd I? because you and Miss O'Connor, you know, used to be all flirting like — but there, now you've been to College and all, and she's had so many admirers — that I suppose now, you've forgot one another — it's always the way — when young people begin to see the world, they find out somebody they like better, he! he! he! —"

"'Twill be an excellent match for her," said Miss Fortescue.

"Law, but then, it seems so odd somehow, that she should like him — it must be for the title and all."

"He's

"He's a very elegant man," cried Miss Fortescue; "do you know him Sir William?"

"I have not that honor—"

"Quite a man of the world—and in my opinion very handsome—I confess I don't wonder at her accepting him."

"But law! he's so much too old for her, why he looks almost forty and she is but seventeen."

"That disparagement is nothing to what occurs every day; an agreeable man at forty, may not despair of success with any woman, and as this young lady I understand, came to town upon a matrimonial expedition, she acts wisely not to be over-nice; for were she to neglect this opportunity, she might never meet with another."

"Law!" cried Mrs. Mansell as a coach stopt at the door, "here are the Dorringtons—how odd somehow, that they should call just as we were talking about Miss O'Connor and all—I wonder whether she's with them—oh I see she's stepping out—it'll be awkward for you, won't it Sir William?"

 "I shall

"I shall watch him," said Miss Fortescue, "I long to see how old lovers meet, ha! ha! ha!—I suppose they'll address each other, like indifferent acquaintance."

"Hush Augusta, they're coming."

However desirous William was of meeting Emily, he was quite unprepared for so sudden an interview.

Various circumstances rendered their meeting mutually embarrassing. Emily recollected Mrs. Dorrington's remarks, and hoping to repel further suspicions, judged it prudent to assume a guarded behaviour, which William interpreting into a coldness, attributed to a preference for Lord Starfort; and on her enquiring whether he was going abroad, replied, with a mind torn by contending emotions, "it is very likely."

"But not immediately," said Emily, stifling her anxiety.

"I know not how soon."

"We heard of your intended tour," said Henrietta, "but we hoped an old acquaintance would call to take leave of us."

"If you meant to give us the slip," said

Mrs.

Mrs. Dorrington, "our call while you were here, is a little *mal a propos.*"

William assured Mrs. Dorrington he had intended calling on her, but had been prevented by seeing her carriage out.

"Well, I never withhold my forgiveness where I see contrition — What stay do you make at Aucherly Park?"

It's very uncertain — probably a month or six weeks."

"Oh then we shall have the pleasure of your society in the country for a short time. We are going to spend a week or ten days at Lord Camleigh's," continued Mrs. Dorrington; "we take Miss O'Connor with us, and Mrs. Lovell will meet us at Compton Stoke."

"Were you ever at Camleigh House, Sir William?" enquired Henrietta, "you would be much pleased with it; the surrounding country is delightful; it's about four miles from Mrs. Methuen's, and three from my Lord Starfort's; but in my opinion, has the advantage, in point of situation, over both. The grounds are laid out with infi-

nite taste, and command very picturesque prospects."

"But Lord Starfort's is more of a shew place," observed Mrs. Dorrington.

"Oh, yes; I'm told his paintings and collection of antiques are very well worth seeing—and he has promised to shew us the *lions* himself."

"You could expect nothing less of a man of so much gallantry as my Lord Starfort," said Miss Fortescue.

"No certainly—he is all politeness."

The reserve between Emily and William every minute increased; but the vivacity of Miss Fortescue supplied many an awkward pause, and made their meeting pass off better than either at first expected.

Augusta Fortescue was about five and twenty, though she generally passed for nineteen: she possessed a quick intelligent eye, with a smart turn of countenance. A piquant smile displaying white teeth, and a playful, animated manner, had gained her many admirers; but she had not yet met with one whose rank and fortune were equal

to

to her wishes: she was much struck with Sir William's person: and as his title and estate were not to be despised, she was glad to hear that he would be at Aucherly Park, while she was a visitor at Mrs. Mansell's.

Emily returned home with a heavy heart: she had now heard from William's own lips, that he was going abroad; there was an air of distraction in his look and voice that alarmed her; but the coldness in his manner to her, stung her to the soul. She regretted that Mrs. Dorrington was not going at once to Compton Stoke, where she might again meet him, and seek an immediate explanation.

Her imagination was puzzled to account for what she had observed; she was sensible she had not met him with that eager welcome, with which she had been accustomed to greet him; yet she was satisfied, the slight degree of reserve which she had thought prudent to assume before Mrs. Dorrington, could not occasion such a marked change of conduct in him.

Emily left town with the Dorringtons,

 wholly

wholly unconscious of the report with which the busy world had been amused; but Lady Camleigh having seen the paragraph in the Morning Post, shewed it to Mrs. Dorrington, and enquired what truth was to be attached to it. Mrs. Dorrington treated it as an idle fabrication, but thought it right to communicate the circumstance to Emily, and suggest the propriety of her avoiding Lord Starfort, who was just arrived with a party of friends at Westoaks.

Emily's delicacy was shocked at the idea of being the subject of public animadversion; and the more so, as she secretly condemned herself, for having, though undesignedly, afforded even the slightest grounds for it: she now knew how to account for William's altered manner; yet felt hurt that he should have listened for a moment to a report so malicious, so unsupported by probability, and in direct opposition to her avowed love for him.

Mrs. Dorrington's advice accorded with her own opinion; she declined accompanying Mrs. Dorrington and Henrietta, when they

went

went to see Lord Starfort's, and contrived so well, that without the appearance of design, she escaped seeing his lordship while she remained at Camleigh House.

Lord Starfort made many enquiries after her, but as he seldom gave himself much trouble, he was satisfied with the excuses that were made: when he heard however she was gone, he declared 'twas d——d unlucky; he had half a mind to set off for a watering-place, in the neighbourhood of Compton-Stoke, in hopes of seeing her, but Colonel Methuen reminding him of the Brighton races, his imagination carried him full speed to the course, and the lovely Emily was banished from his thoughts.

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

MATERNAL ADVICE.

AT Mrs. Dorrington's parties in the country, music was generally substituted for cards, and understanding Miss Fortescue was a skilful performer, Mrs. Dorrington, with Henrietta and Emily called on Mrs. Mansell to fix a day for a little concert.

"Oh, 'twill be very agreeable," cried Mrs. Mansell — "I expect Augusta home every minute — but any day I'm sure we shall be very happy —"

"Miss Fortescue," said Mrs. Dorrington, "will be a great acquisition to our musical parties."

"Does she sing?" enquired Emily.

"Oh

"Oh law, yes—delightful—all Italian-like. Sir William Aucherly was here the other day, and brought his flute and all—and there, do you know, they went on all the morning—so pleasant, somehow."

A new and uneasy sensation stole into Emily's bosom.

"You haven't seen Lady Aucherly yet I suppose, Mrs. Dorrington?" continued Mrs. Mansell—"I hear she intends to see no company like—'tis what I pick up through the servants—and there, when she went to church for the first time, all eyes were upon her as you may suppose, and she walked up the aisle so solemn, somehow—with a long black veil and all—and every thing I'm told is alter'd like, at Aucherly Park—so much state and form somehow—but Sir William seems as sociable as ever, and comes to see us, because 'tis so gloomy I suppose at Aucherly Park, all so mournful like. He came this morning to take Augusta out riding, because she was saying the other day, how fond she was of riding—and had no one to ride out with her, and

so

so Sir William immediately proposed to be her escort like."

"She rides well, I guess," observed Henrietta.

"Oh law, yes — she has learnt and all — so accomplished — such a favorite with every body."

"She is an elegant figure," said Henrietta, "and very handsome."

"Oh yes, and Sir William thinks her more beautiful than her sister, my cousin Lady Westenra — and so amiable — all lively like, and such a sweet temper — I expected her back before this time — but there I fancy they don't think of time, when they're together — they are so happy — I can see —"

Emily's heart fluttered, and to conceal her emotions, she went to the window under pretence of admiring the grounds.

"They are beautifully laid out," said Henrietta following her.

"'Tis all Mr. Mansell's plan, like — he's so fond of gardening — botany, and all."

While Emily's eyes were idly bent on the plantations before her, she beheld William

coming

coming out of a dark walk, with Miss Fortescue hanging familiarly on his arm. She saw her stoop to gather a flower — William procured it for her, and placed it himself in her bosom, while unknowingly he planted a thorn in Emily's.

"Ah, there's Sir William and Augusta coming," cried Mrs. Mansell, throwing open the window, and calling to Miss Fortescue to make haste. "I can't think how they came in that way—arm in arm I see—so loving — I suppose they've been strolling about, thinking of nobody but themselves."

Miss Fortescue now entered, blooming with the exercise she had been taking, and with an easy, though well bred freedom, began a lively conversation with the visitors.

Sir William took a seat next Mrs. Dorrington, who made many enquiries after his sister and Lady Aucherly.

"Why Augusta, how long have you been back?" enquired Mrs. Mansell.

"Oh, Sir William and I have been rambling about this half hour: you'll find great havoc among your fruit; he has been picking

all the finest for me. You can't think how gallant he has been—I must put this rose in water."

"You have had a pleasant ride, I hope," said Mrs. Dorrington.

"How could it be otherwise; your prospects are delightful; and to do Sir William justice, he's so pleasant a companion, that our ride seemed scarcely an hour, though we've been out nearly three: we returned through a charming green lane, and perceiving the paddock gate open, we gave our horses to the grooms, and came in through the orchard."

"Which way did you ride?" said Mrs. Dorrington.

While Miss Fortescue gave an account of her morning's excursion, Emily suffered a thousand pangs; but she was destined to encounter a more severe trial, the evening of Mrs. Dorrington's music party.

After one of Handel's overtures, Miss Fortescue was requested to play a concerto on the grand piano forté. She selected one of Viotti's shewy compositions, and as the company

pany had not heard her before, great attention was paid while she was playing; Mr. Mansell accompanied her on the violoncello, and her performance went off with great eclât. William complimented her on her superior execution: she made room for him to sit next her on the sopha—he could not decline the offer. She had now secured him to herself, and though Emily was warbling '*Hope told a flattering tale,*' William was obliged by the rules of politeness to attend to the familiar whisperings of the artful Augusta, who with cunning policy, praised and found fault by turns, with Emily's singing—"she has a pretty voice, but her lower notes are not full enough:- ah, she accomplished that difficult passage very well, very well indeed—Oh! this is charming. It's a sweet air, and shews off a singer to great advantage: she must have practised this often; I suspect it's her *shew-piece*—she sings with much taste—but she has not a powerful voice; she has a cold, hasn't she?—that was a sweet cadence—ah, she reserv'd that shake for the finish—charmingly sung," cried Miss For-

tescue, joining with the rest of the company in their praises, "charmingly sung."

Emily rose from the instrument and beheld the object of her affections ensnared by her insidious rival.

"Come, Sir William," said Miss Fortescue, "I'm going to sing, I shall want you to turn over the leaves for me; she then held out her hand to him, and he led her to the piano-forté.

Emily sighed. William had not stood by *her* when *she* was singing: he had been allured by the blandishments of Miss Fortescue; but she fancied, and hoped, and half believed she perceived a constraint, a forced politeness in his manner, towards Miss Fortescue; this allayed her fears, and as William wished her good night, she distinguished accents of kindness in his voice, that soothed her distressed mind.

Her feelings had been deeply wounded at the idea of William's credulity, yet she had so far subdued them on her arrival at Compton-Stoke, that she anxiously waited for an opportunity of explaining her conduct;

duct; but the circumstances attending their meeting at Mrs. Mansell's, and afterwards at Mrs. Dorrington's were such, as rendered the task too humiliating. With mingled sensations of joy and regret did she hear his visit to the continent was postponed: she hoped a little time would clear away every suspicion he had entertained to her disadvantage; yet she could not divest herself of a fear that the charms of Miss Fortescue had caused the alteration in his plans.

Mrs. Mansell piqued herself upon her penetration in discovering love affairs, and delighting to display her discernment, she could not deny herself the pleasure of dropping a few hints to Lady Aucherly of "the little attachment like," she fancied she perceived between William and her cousin: Lady Aucherly took the alarm; she dissembled her apprehensions before her meddling informer, but took the first opportunity of speaking to her son on the subject.

She began by adverting to his continuance at Oxford; he told her, it was at present

sent his intention to remain at college till the ensuing Michaelmas vacation.

"I am glad of it," said her ladyship—"and though I would wish to avoid flattering you, yet it is but truth to acknowledge how much I am gratified by having a son so accomplished. It is not from my own observation alone that I form my opinion: I have heard your praise from all quarters; not merely from such friends who would lavish their commendations, because they know how sweet it is to a mother's ear, but from those, on whose impartial judgment I can rely. In short my dear William, you and Caroline are my pride—I glory in being your mother; and with anxious solicitude look forward to your forming a connexion, which, while it is calculated to ensure your happiness, shall be such as your rank and fortune entitle you to—but I am entering on a subject, which need not at present occupy your thoughts—you are still very young, and had the affairs on the continent assumed a more peaceable aspect, you ought to finish your education by making the tour of Europe,

rope, but as you cannot do that, you must gather information from books — it shall be my care to introduce you to a polished society, from which you may select a woman every way qualified to make you happy — but what should I suffer, were you to throw yourself away on some insignificant beauty — I will not anticipate such a distressing event. I cannot think you would be so infatuated as to lose sight of a commendable respect due to your family, and lessen its dignity by a marriage with a woman of a contemptible mind or an obscure birth. You possess, I am sure, a more just discrimination than to be attracted by the shewy charms and superficial accomplishments of such a woman as Miss Fortescue. Your good sense has already penetrated her character and appreciated her slender merits: she is several years older than you are, and may flatter herself with her knowledge of the world, she may manage to gain your affections; but I have not the smallest apprehensions on that account. I safely trust Miss Fortescue to your discernment — no doubt you must have

discovered

discovered a certain studied method—a sort of attack upon your heart—"

William felt the truth of his mother's hints, and assured her that his heart was in no danger from Miss Fortescue.

"But I fear, my dear William, it may owe its security to a previous attachment—there is an amiable and lovely girl—and most sincerely do I wish she had every requisite to make her a fit object of your regard—you must guess to whom I allude."

"I think you mean Emily O'Connor."

"You are right—I know how imperiously an ardent affection over-rules all objections, which a fond parent may oppose, yet, I trust such an attachment does not exist—if it does—it will be useless for me to state them—tell me, am I to speak?"

William hesitated.

"Now then," said Lady Aucherly with a deep sigh, "my hopes are clouded."

"Dearest mother," cried William, taking her hand, "though I confess I love her, you shall not find me deaf to your advice."

"I know," continued Lady Aucherly, "the

"the force of education and habit too often governs our reason — I am perhaps an instance of this. I may attempt to overcome prejudice, and succeed in ordinary cases, but in an affair so near my heart, it requires a fortitude I am not possessed of. It has been my darling wish to see you form a respectable connexion; it has been a solace to me in my retirement here, to picture to myself your future prospects: forgive a mother's weakness, if I add that the idea of this young woman's frustrating my hopes, has given me much uneasiness — your marrying her, would inflict a pang I cannot express; yet if your happiness depends upon it, I will sacrifice mine, rather than you should be miserable — I will forget the obscurity of her birth — for obscure no doubt it is — perhaps attended by degrading circumstances; I will receive her as my daughter — I will love her too — if I can thereby add to my William's happiness—"

"Oh my mother, you are too good — your generosity overpowers me — dearly as I love Emily, I should be unworthy to be your son,

son, could I act in defiance of your approbation; yet I know not that such a trial is reserved for me—I know not that Emily still loves me."

Lady Aucherly seized the advantage which this disclosure afforded, and continued—"However this may be, do nothing rashly. You are both very young; too young to form an accurate judgment on an affair of so much importance. Through the medium of love, our opinions are too often fallacious: your partiality for Emily, disqualifies you for reflecting how she may be suited to your disposition through life, and as she has already given you cause to doubt the steadiness of her affection, be assured her mind and habits of life are unformed; her beautiful exterior and pleasing manners are not alone calculated to constitute the permanent felicity of domestic life. It is necessary that every thought, wish, and action, should be reciprocal, otherwise there must of course exist a difference of opinion, and as it is human nature to desire the accomplishment of our wishes, this difference of

opinion

opinion inevitably produces altercation, and then domestic happiness ceases. I am convinced that most of the marriages which prove unhappy, are those, where the parties have not previously examined and compared their particular characters and habits of life."

William acknowledged the justness of his mother's observations, and promised to take no decisive step in a matter of so much consequence without her advice.

Lady Aucherly perceived with secret satisfaction the impression she had made; she knew that children, as they grow up often yield, from the habitual association of ideas, to the admonition of the parent whom they have been ever taught to respect, and she flattered herself it was in her power, in a great measure, to model her son to her own wishes.

During William's stay at Aucherly Park, he endeavoured to support before his mother his usual spirits, but alone he was thoughtful and melancholy. The supposition of Emily's inconstancy, had severely afflicted him; and though he persuaded himself that

Lord Starfort's attentions were not to be construed into a serious attachment, yet the suspicion, that Emily might have given him encouragement, which was in some degree warranted by what Temple had witnessed, harrassed his mind, and the reserve with which she treated him, kept alive his fears: still he was reluctant to condemn her without further proofs, and understanding she was going with Mrs, Lovell to Bath some time in November, he determined to suspend his judgment, till he should see whether any further inconsistency appeared in her conduct, at a place where her beauty would be so likely to attract admirers. He indulged a fond hope, that the purity of her mind would defy the breath of censure—that her conduct had been misrepresented—that she was not the capricious being he had been led to imagine: then when he had buoyed up his soul with the sweet conviction that she was as amiable as ever, the recollection of his mother's disapprobation presented itself, and made him miserable.

In his way to Oxford he passed through Bath,

Bath, where his friend Temple, who had left the University, was with his mother and family. William opened the state of his mind to him, and earnestly desired his advice; "I know," said he, "I ought at once, to learn from her my fate, but I would not wound her feelings by possibly unjust suspicions, and I am coward enough to dread an investigation. Suspence is insupportable when we depend on others to relieve our anxiety, but when it is in our own power, we had often rather endure a tormenting interval of uncertainty, in which we can enjoy a remote hope, than by seeking to satisfy our doubts, risk the possibility of blasting our prospect for ever—I confess—I have not courage to seek an explanation."

Temple recommended him to ascertain first, what he had to fear from Lord Starfort, and in case he found that Emily's affections were not estranged, to apply to Mrs. Lovell, for every information she could give of Emily's family, by which means he might possibly be enabled to combat Lady Aucherly's objections.

 William

William was resolved to act upon his friend's advice: "Emily will be here," said he, "early next month — you must watch her, and give me every particular you observe; for though Lord Starfort is not here, it is of little consequence to me who my rival is, there may be other Starforts to rob me of her affection. I apprehend she will remain here with Mrs, Lovell about six weeks — in which case, I shall be here again in my way home, before she goes, and upon your report, I shall regulate my conduct."

Temple received several letters from William, which plainly told how deeply rooted his affection for Emily was; and exhibited a mind painfully agitated by the conflict of love, hope, doubts, and fears. At length he received information that the Dorrington family had left Devonshire on a visit to Lord Faulkner; and concluding that Mrs. Lovell and Emily were arrived at Bath, he looked for them at public places, and made frequent enquiries, but being unable to gain any intelligence of them, he supposed they were with the Dorrington party at Wycombe, for a

short

short time previously to their coming to Bath; great was his surprize therefore, when he heard by mere accident that Emily had been in Bath a fortnight.

Going into a library in Milsom-street, he met an old acquaintance of his, the Reverend Mr. Hammett, and after the usual salutations had passed, Temple asked where he should have the pleasure of calling upon him.

"I'm at my old quarters, Mrs. Wheeler's boarding table," replied Mr. Hammett; and on Temple's making some enquiry respecting the company there, he began giving him an account: "We have upon the whole, a very respectable set—a worthy Mr. and Mrs. Webb—then there's Sir Edward Lloyd; you've heard of him I dare say, and lately we've had an agreeable addition to our party, a Mrs Lovell, and a very pretty Miss O'Connor."

Temple was on the point of expressing his surprize, but wishing to gain further information respecting the company Emily associated with, he let Mr. Hammett proceed without interruption.

"We have occasionally a French Count, who amuses us with his knowledge of cookery, but this unfortunately has given rise to a general discussion of every thing on the table. Then we've half a dozen queer beings in the shape of widows and bachelors, who seem so intent upon eating, that I'm sure our good hostess must be a considerable loser by them—you'd be vastly entertained to see their eager looks. Will you dine with me?—besides we've some smart young ladies, and a Mr. Dixon, who is their beau upon all occasions, and seems mightily taken with Miss O'Connor, Come, what say you."

"You hold out a great inducement in mentioning that Miss O'Conner is of the party—I am well acquainted with her."

"Ah, Temple, I see how the wind lies; but you must take care how you interfere with Mr. Dixon."

As Temple was desirous, on William's account, of judging how far Mr. Hammett's hints with regard to Emily and Mr. Dixon were correct, he accepted the invitation.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOARDING TABLE.

A Particular friend of Mrs. Lovell's in Jamaica, had returned a few years ago from that island to Liverpool, where she resided, and Mrs. Lovell had received many pressing invitations to pay her a visit, but had felt obliged to decline them, on account of the length of the journey. Mrs. Heywood was now at Bath, and Mrs. Lovell proposed spending a short time there, before her return to town: Emily was equally pleased with the plan, and as Wycombe was only seven miles from Bath, she anticipated the pleasure of meeting Lady Faulkner and Miss Dorrington.

Mrs. Lovell found Mrs. Heywood settled in comfortable lodgings at Mrs. Wheeler's boarding house, and the Bath season not being far advanced, the party at table happened to be small and tolerably select: there were apartments similar to Mrs. Heywood's unoccupied, and though Mrs. Lovell was at first averse to the plan of boarding, yet considering it would save her much trouble, she was persuaded to engage them.

At this time, about ten persons sat down at table, and Mrs. Lovell was much pleased with the decorum that was observed; few of them indeed, aspired to elegance of manners, yet they were in general well bred and sociable. By degrees, however, as the reserve occasioned by new comers wore away, some of the company seemed inclined to complain of deficiencies in the dinner; hinting at the same time what an excellent table was kept at Mrs. ——'s.

Mrs. Wheeler bore all complaints, well knowing it would be impossible to please every one: the dinner, however, passed off very well, and Mrs. Lovell did not, upon the

whole,

whole, repent of having adopted Mrs. Heywood's advice.

In the evening, Emily was entertained by an account which Mrs. Heywood gave her of the company in the house.

"In the first place, you must know, the eating parlour is distinguished by the appellation of the common room, and when you have an opportunity, you may amuse yourself by the perusal of the rules over the fire place, which I should imagine have been hung there these twenty years. On the other side of the hall, is a parlour occupied by the lame Welsh baronet, the gentleman who sat opposite to me, Sir Edward Lloyd; he's a great support to the house, as well on account of his rank, as of his almost constantly taking up his abode here, for six months of the year — then the rooms over ours, are still call'd drawing-rooms: one of them belongs to Miss Frampton, the lady you observed was so well dress'd, and the other is occupied by Mrs. Snelgrove and her daughter, whom you may hear all day rattling

 on

on her piano-forte, making the house ring with country dances, or screaming Vauxhall songs."

"Who was the gentleman," said Emily, "who so pathetically lamented the omission of oyster sauce?"

"And displayed so much skill," added Mrs. Lovell, "in devilling the turkey's gizzard."

"Mr. Armstrong—a great epicure: he has the back parlour behind Sir Edward's; and others are accommodated at a lodging-house a little way off, which belongs to Mrs. Wheeler.

The next day Mrs. Lovell mistaking the dinner bells, came with Emily into the common room, before the dinner was on the table, and as it was considerably after the usual hour, most of the gentlemen were assembled, complaining of the want of punctuality, and concluding Mrs. Lovell was also impatient for her dinner, they took the liberty of joining her name in their remonstrances to Mrs. Wheeler.

"'Tis past the time," cried Sir Edward,

holding

holding up his watch, as Mrs. Wheeler brushed by to the top of the table.

"Keeping Mrs. Lovell and the young lady and all of us starving here," added Mr. Armstrong, taking his seat.

"Our clock, sir, was ——."

"Aye, aye, aye."

"I don't see Mrs. Cottle among us," said a young man, whose physiognomy indicated officious civility.

"Don't you see her, Mr. Dixon? look, she's tripping across the street with her cruet of wine in her hand," said Mr. Hammett, "you must leave room for her."

"What an excellent supply of fish there was in the market to-day," observed Mr. Armstrong, anticipating the top dish, and eagerly watching the removal of the cover, which was wafted off, and displayed a boiled calf's head.

"Is that a turbot?" enquired a gentleman at the other end of the table with spectacles on.

"It's a calf's head, sir," replied Mr. Armstrong,

strong, with a sneer, "Mrs. Wheeler couldn't get any fish."

"I thought, sir, you said there was plenty in the market."

"There was fish, sir," said Mrs. Wheeler, "but not such as I could put on the table."

"The fish was dear, I own," retorted Mr. Armstrong, sarcastically.

"I hope we can all make a dinner without fish," said Sir Edward, taking Mrs. Wheeler's part, and hoping to diffuse good humour, "I'm sure, where there's so noble a piece of roast beef as that, no one ought to complain."

"And here's an excellent meat pie, sir," added Mrs. Cottle.

"But 'tis mutton," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Well, sir, and what's better than a mutton pie."

"Is that vinegar by you, ma'am?" enquired the gentleman in spectacles.

"No, sir," squeaked Mrs. Cottle, "'tis my wine."

"I've a great notion 'tis brandy," said Mr. Armstrong, aside to Mrs. Snelgrove, who

who was tickled at the conceit, but cried, "oh fie."

"What may be under that cover, sir?" enquired Mrs. Cottle.

"Potatoes!" cried Mr. Armstrong, mournfully, as he lifted up the cover, "and what may be under yours."

"Bless me! I believe it's mutton kidnies: and there are mutton chops to correspond."

"Why at this rate," said Mr. Armstrong, pettishly, "we shall all bleat soon."

"We seldom have a good sallad," cried Sir Edward.

"And Bath," observed Mrs. Snelgrove, "is famous for vegetables."

"Why, Mrs. Wheeler," continued Sir Edward, giving the sallad bowl a contemptuous push, "you could rear better than this in your own garden."

Now Mrs. Wheeler did not so much regard the remarks of her other guests, but when Sir Edward made complaints, she felt their full force, and promising to get a better sallad the next day. said she had some ducks coming and a few tarts.

Mrs.

Mrs. Lovell pitied her situation, and took care rather to express a satisfaction at the dinner, than shew the least inclination to find fault. After she had been in the house about a week, she was able to form a pretty accurate judgment of the characters she was daily in the habit of meeting.

Sir Edward seemed as if he were desirous to let them all see that though he was a baronet, he could accommodate himself to the limited comforts of a boarding table, and talked a great deal and somewhat loud, as if to encourage himself to be condescending, and to prevent his having time to consider who the persons might be with whom he associated. In Mr. Dixon, she perceived intrusive politeness, vainly exerted to skreen the want of a liberal education and the good breeding of a gentleman: his ignorance of the world often excited her smile, but as his active attentions evinced great desire to please, neither Mrs. Lovell nor Emily could altogether reject civilities, which, however troublesome, were well meant. Miss Snelgrove he found more easy of access; she was greedy of notice and pleased with any atten-

tions paid her; and as she appeared in Mr. Dixon's eyes, if not so beautiful, at least a more fashionable woman than Emily, he soon attached himself almost exclusively to her. He was pleased to find himself of consequence, and listened with delight to her anecdotes of high life, which she detailed in such a manner, as led him to believe she was accustomed to the first circles of fashion; but persons of more discernment were not to be so imposed on. It was easy to understand the blush of mortification which visited her cheek, whenever her mother inadvertently referred to their residence in the city; which circumstance had most provokingly slipped out more than once, and Miss Snelgrove felt it the more poignantly, as her mother, instead of going on with what she was saying, which would have rendered the blunder less conspicuous, would stop short, and give a look at her daughter, to see whether she had noticed it, which convinced her hearers that Mrs. Snelgrove dreaded a private reprimand.

Opposed to Miss Snelgrove, was Miss Frampton; who seemed desirous of claim-

ing

ing acquaintance, rather with books than with people of high rank; yet as her secret aim was to gain admirers by her good sense, she carefully avoided every thing like pedantry. She was between thirty and forty, and appeared to have no wish to pass for being younger; it was evident, however, she had a fondness for dress, but it shewed itself, not in ornamental finery, but in the judicious union of economy and taste, extreme neatness and the chastened elegance of fashion. Her manners were genteel and unaffected, and her conversation sensible and entertaining.

The company were disposed to be sociable, and by courteous behaviour, seemed desirous of promoting their general comfort: no one openly assumed a superiority, though there were a few, who, by indirect remarks, would occasionally betray an anxiety to have it understood they were accustomed to a better style.

As Bath was now filling, the boarding-table was more numerously attended, but its respectability was so much diminished,

that

that Mrs. Lovell was inclined to shorten her stay at Bath, rather than continue at Mrs. Wheeler's, or have the trouble of removing to other lodgings.

It was at this time, Mr. Hammett had given the invitation to Temple; and happening soon afterwards to meet Mrs. Lovell, he told her, *en passant*, that Mr. Temple, whom he understood was an acquaintance of her's, had promised to dine with him.

Emily was exceedingly mortified at this information.

"It's certainly vexing," said Mrs. Lovell, "that he should come when our party is so much altered for the worse."

"I shouldn't have minded it a week ago," returned Emily, "but now — such a set — 'twill be so awkward — and that Mrs. Hancock who is just come —"

"She is a most uncommonly vulgar woman—indeed if the company had been such as it is now when we first came, I could not have consented to stay a day here — but it's hardly worth while to change now."

"It's so disagreeable to hear them all

talking

talking about the dinner; I wonder Mrs. Wheeler can bear it. I shall be quite shock'd if they continue their remarks to-day."

"Well," said Mrs. Lovell, "we must hope for the best."

Temple was punctual to the dinner-hour, and as the company took their seats according to the time of their coming to the house, he found he could not obtain a place next Emily, but endeavoured to get as nearly opposite as he could.

"Fust come, fust sarv'd, sir," said Mrs. Hancock, seating herself above him, "I camed isterday, so here I squats: 'tis in the rules, and 'tis vel there *be* rules, else we should be all at sixes and sevens, higgledy, piggledy: not but what 'tis all as good this hind of the table as the t'other—every bit—and I see summut as I d' love—b'il'd pourk and pease pudd'n—and please the pigs, I'll have some."

"She'll please herself for *one* then," said Mr. Armstrong, "Monsieur St. Foix, what soup is that, pray?"

"Indeed

"Indeed it look noting I can very mush recommend."

"It's veal, sir," said Mrs. Snelgrove; "a knuckle of veal boil'd down."

"It look as if dere was too mush made of it."

"So it do, sir," cried Mrs. Hancock, "and I take it, Mounseer Count, 'tis what you call soup meager, eh?"

"Pardon, madam—dat is quite anoder ting—"

"Now, sir, if it bain't taking too great a liberty, might I ask, whether you ever eat a frog? 'cause I've heard tell of such stories of fricassees in your country, of cats and mice and all sorts of varmints, tuods and frogs and what not, that for my part, I could never bring myself to think 'twas all true—so I should like to know for sartain—hope no offence, sir."

"Madam, you be very misinformed; we eat no sush tings, and *au contraire*, should consider it a breash of good breeding to talk of sush '*varmints*' at dinner."

"Vell now, I thought as 'twasn't true, though

though my sister Grimshaw ou'd 'sist upon it as 'twas—fegs! there's a thief in the can'le," continued Mrs. Hancock, taking a pin from her side to remedy the defect: "and now, neighbour Temple, hand my plate for some pourk—near the handle, please, 'cause 'tain't done in the middle—oh law, you put your thumb in my mustard—never mind—oh, you ha'n't—now for some pudd'n—there—that's vell."

"Is there no such thing as a made dish of any kind that's fit to eat," said Mr. Armstrong, with a distressed countenance looking round the table—"Mr. Temple, I'll beg the favor, sir, of knowing what is under that cover by you."

"A custard pudding, sir."

"Law, Squire T." cried Mrs. Hancock, "the gentleman don't mean that there kiver—'tis this'n—law, and if it bain't hog's pudd'n!—wish I'd know'd it afore; 'vever I must have some present—"

"Why, Mr. Armstrong," said Mrs. Wheeler timidly, "you've nothing on your plate."

"No,

"No, nor likely to, ma'am."

"Dear me, sir, I'm sorry there's nothing you can fancy."

"There's plenty too," observed Mrs. Webb.

"There's too much dinner to-day," said Sir Edward, in a friendly tone to Mrs. Wheeler—"less of it, and better of the sort another time my good lady."

"Quality not quantity for me," squeaked Mrs. Cottle.

"The boil'd things are raw, and the roast are as dry as a stick," said Mr. Armstrong; "do let us have some of that pork fried."

"Yes sure, sir."

"That's a waste too," observed Sir Edward.

"And do tell the cook," continued Mr. Armstrong, "to pepper it well—"

"Let there be a piece for me," added Mrs. Hancock, "without any pepper; 'ton't do for my cough—though I be fond of spices, they bain't fond of me—for I be but a poor body for health, though I look so rumbustious—I was bad enough o'conscience

isterday

isterday evening; I was bad in my bowels ma'am, and a'ter I went to bed, I grew wus and wus; I thought I should have died in the night: 'tis going about they tell me—and here I'm come to Bath," continued she, sucking a chicken bone, "to have my bad leg pumpt upon—did you call for bread, neighbour Temple—here, you shall have mine, I ha'n't a bit it—come, I'll have the crust and you shall have the peth—excuse my paws, hands were made afore knives and forks—if you bain't going to drink no more of that there beer, I'll thank'e for't—one good turn deserves another, you know—there's just enough for me now, and by'n by I'll have a good swig a'ter my cheese—why neighbour, you don't eat—I must have some more pa'sley and butter—not over my bacon, squire—'tisn't 'il'd, is it? ah 'tis, what a pity: it quite spiles one's dinner. What nice looking pertaters these be," continued she, cutting one in half with her knife—"Law, it grates again the steel—they bain't done—stick your fork in some cabbage for me, will'e squire; that's vell."

Mr.

Mr. Hammett enjoyed seeing Temple oppressed with Mrs. Hancock's volubility, and made frequent signs to Emily to observe them, but she was too much mortified, to join in his mirth.

"Here's the fried pork, Mr. Armstrong," said Mrs. Wheeler.

"Ah, now, this looks well," said he, helping himself plentifully — "there's some sense in this — will any body like some? — it's very well season'd."

"What say you, Miss O'Connor?" said Mr. Dixon, briskly stretching across the table to reach her plate, "allow me to anticipate your wishes."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Hancock, "she do look as if, she wanted summut, poor young lady — with a hempty plate afore her."

"Sir Edward won't you take some? said Mr. Armstrong, helping himself again, and continuing to eat voraciously, with his head down to his plate.

"Vell, if miss on't, nor Sir Eddurd, nor nobody, *I* vill — d'ye hear, Mr. Harmstrong — I'll take a mouthful of your fry, sir, I'll

help'e to hempt the dish, if you bain't going to heat it all — thank'e sir — oh, ga!" cried Mrs. Hancock, with a wry face, "it tastes as if a drop o'talla had fell upon it."

"Damn it, madam," exclaimed Mr. Armstrong, in a rage, "you turn every body sick."

"Don't cuss at me, sir."

"I didn't, ma'am."

"Oh, don't you say so," continued Mrs. Hancock, shaking her fore finger at him, "for you *know* you did."

"Well there's enough said," replied Mr. Armstrong, sending away his plate.

"There's a forfeit though for *you*, sir," said Mrs. Cottle, "for speaking a bad word, before the ladies have left the table."

"So there is," cried Mrs. Hancock, "'tis rule the fift — I was a reading 'em this marning: and the gentlemen bain't to smoke neither, which I'm very glad of, for I can't abide the smell of bacca. Law squire Temple, what a poor dinner you've a made — I never made a better: so fond of pourk — now

now for a mouthful of cheese, then I shall be comfortable — and there, as sister Grimshaw and I says, if Boney should come, let the wus come to the wus, we could make a dinner any day off bre'ncheese an a inion; but there my nevy Tom — Tom Grimshaw, he says, there's no fear of Boney's coming as long as we've got the wolunteers to purtect us — I s'pose you be one on 'em, sir — Mr. Vebb please to cut me some of that there cheese, for this as they've sent round is too new for me."

"You like the faded part, I think, ma'am?"

"Faded!" repeated Mrs. Hancock aside to Temple, "faded! fiddlededee — Vell, Mr. Vebb, faded if you please, though I don't care if 'tis a little rotten."

The company were not a little disgusted with Mrs. Hancock's manners and conversation, and several of them determined to speak to Mrs. Wheeler, that she might not be again admitted to the table. Emily was much vexed that Temple should have witnessed such vulgarity, and felt mortified at

the idea, that he might suppose the society, in which he saw her, had been voluntarily made choice of.

She had an opportunity however, a few days afterwards, of explaining to him the circumstances which had induced Mrs. Lovell to lodge at Mrs. Wheeler's, and concluded by giving him a ludicrous account of Mrs. Hancock's dismissal.

Temple informed her, he was very shortly going from Bath; but neither of them mentioned the name of William Aucherly.

Mrs. Lovell and Emily spent much of their time with Mrs. Heywood, who being an invalid, seldom went into evening parties, though she frequently enjoyed the company of her friends in her own apartment.

"I invited Miss Frampton this evening," said Mrs. Heywood, "but she is gone to the play."

"Yes," observed Mrs. Snelgrove, "I saw at dinner she was dress'd for going out."

"She seems a very well-informed woman," said

said Mrs. Lovell, "and I should suppose, as she is an early riser, she devotes much of her time to reading."

Miss Snelgrove laughed.

"Why, as for that," returned Mrs. Snelgrove, "I can't say; I rather think she has enough to do, without reading, poor soul!—washing and ironing."

"Her room is quite a laundry," said Miss Snelgrove, laughing again.

"Oh, she does every thing herself," continued the mother: "she has no servant, and by what I can learn, her purse is none of the heaviest, and how in the name of wonder then, can she go as smart as she does, if 'twasn't for her contrivances—God bless me, what shifts that woman must be put to! why I've heard she'll make a piece of muslin go through a dozen changes before she has done with it—gown, short dress, cloak, veil, and turban, to say nothing of tuckers, frills, and borders."

"She is always well dress'd I think," said Mrs. Heywood.

"Why, ma'am, she ransacks all Bath for

 bargains

bargains — it puts me in mind of a lady who used to buy remnants at my brother's — I say," continued Mrs. Snelgrove, having received an angry look from her daughter, "that's — he saw her, and — so you see as I was saying of Miss Frampton, she does just the same — then she's up every morning by six — you must hear her stirring Mrs. Lovell, her room is over your's — and from that time she goes on washing and ironing, mending, making, altering, and the rest on't, till one o'clock? then out she goes as nice and genteel as any body — no one would suppose how she had been slaving all the morning. I often think when she comes down dress'd for dinner, if we could but have seen her a few hours before at the washing tub, ha! ha!"

Miss Snelgrove joined in the laugh "Poor Miss Frampton — such a learned lady too."

"Well I really thought," said Sir Edward, laying down the Bath Journal, "she had been too bookish to be so much occupied about her dress."

"Why, so most people think," returned Mrs. Snelgrove, "but 'tis a fact I assure

you

you — we are upon the same floor, and so — we can't help being pretty well informed you know: she *does* read to be sure — and picks up a good deal to talk about, but 'tis all out of the reviews; she scarcely reads any thing else I believe — I know she sits up most nights a reading 'em 'till past midnight: God bless the woman, I wonder it doesn't wear her out — working body and mind as she does, early and late —"

"Oh law!" exclaimed Miss Snelgrove, "I've seen her eyes close over a book with the fatigues she has gone through: she must be at some trouble to keep them open at the play, poor thing."

"Why, Miss O'Connor, you hav'n't been to the play yet, said Mrs. Snelgrove, "nor to any of the balls I think, suppose you and Mrs. Lovell go with us to the next, eh? we'll make a party, and Mr. Dixon shall be our beau."

"We don't intend going to any of the balls," replied Emily, exchanging a shrewd glance with Mrs. Lovell, "to morrow we

 go

go to Wycombe for a week; Lady Faulkner gives a dance on Friday."'

"Ah I heard of it," said Miss Snelgrove, "'twill be very pleasant I dare say — wasn't Lady Faulkner one of the ladies I saw you with — the morning you returned from Wycombe?"

"Yes, and the other was Miss Dorrington — we had been at the Repository: what an excellent institution it is —"

"I believe it is," said Miss Snelgrove, hastily, "Lady Faulkner was the slightest figure, wasn't she? — I thought so; she's a very fine young woman. I heard her ball talked of last night at the upper rooms: we had, I assure you, quite a crowded ball; the room was full of fashion, and there was the best dancer I think I ever saw, Miss Fortescue, she is very handsome, and attracted a great deal of notice."

"I heard she was in Bath," returned Emily: "she is a noted good dancer."

"And she had a very elegant man for her partner too—I could not at first learn who he

was,

was, but going away I heard 'twas a Sir William Aucherly."

This intelligence gave Emily inexpressible uneasiness; she concluded William had followed Miss Fortescue to Bath, and the scenes at East Compton recurred to her mind, with the most painful minuteness: her changing cheek however was unnoticed; Mrs. Lovell was engaged in conversation with Sir Edward, and as Miss Snelgrove launched forth into a full description of the ball, Emily affected to be much interested by it, though her thoughts were far otherwise engaged. The loss of William's affection appeared but too certain: all her fears seemed confirmed; no ray of hope remained. She now wished, now dreaded meeting him: she guessed he would be at Lady Faulkner's; there was a probability of Miss Fortescue's being there, and she anticipated the mortification of again witnessing the success of her fascination.

At Wycombe, Emily disguised her feelings, and assumed a gaiety that was foreign to her heart: she wished to ascertain whe-

ther Miss Fortescue had been invited, and planned several ways of making the enquiry in the most careless manner, but chose rather to wait the event, than run the risk of betraying her anxiety.

She listened with almost breathless apprehension, as the company were announced; at ten o'clock, Miss Fortescue was not come, and Emily was at length satisfied, her fears were groundless. When William entered, she endeavoured to compose her agitated spirits, and summoned all her pride to support the interview. He was advancing towards her, when the music began, and being engaged to Lady Faulkner who opened the ball, he led her to her place without having had an opportunity of speaking to Emily.

As the gentlemen came very late, many ladies were a long time without partners; Emily was sitting with Miss Smith-Bouverie, when a set of fashionable young men entered at the close of the second dance: two or three of them knew Emily, and engaged her for different parts of the evening; she

was

was still conversing with them, when by an indirect glance, she perceived William standing near her. He was watching an opportunity of speaking to her, but Emily's face was constantly averted from him: he beheld her surrounded by a group of young men, who seemed emulous of obtaining a preference: his heart misgave him; yet discarding his doubts, and anxious to re-instate himself in her favour, he joined the party, and by taking a share in their conversation, the meeting between him and Emily was rendered less embarrassing: he solicited her hand, but Emily was engaged.

"How unfortunate! for I am to dance with Miss Dorrington the two following dances, but if I might trespass so long on your memory, I would hope for the pleasure of dancing with you the fourth set."

His manner dispelled her reserve, and Emily readily assented without considering her other engagements. Supper also intervened, and when the dancing recommenced, Lord Charles Bentley came up gaily to

 Emily,

Emily, saying, " Well Miss O'Connor, I'm come to claim your hand."

Emily looked disconcerted.

" Oh, you must remember you promised to dance with me the two first dances after supper."

" Indeed then I am in a sad scrape, for Sir William Aucherly considers me engaged to him."

" Never mind, I'll settle that with him, you can't be off your engagement with me, for I ask'd you the moment I came into the room, I knew the dancing after supper was the pleasantest part; so don't fret yourself, I'll explain it all to Sir William — here he's coming — you can't dance with Miss O'Connor; 'twas a little mistake of her's," continued Lord Charles laughing, " a little blunder."

" I must hear Miss O'Connor say so," said William, somewhat gravely.

" Indeed," said Emily, " 'twas quite a mistake — I'll tell you —"

" I told you 'twas a little mistake," cried Lord Charles, leading Emily to the dance;

" never

"never mind Sir William; she'll dance with you another time — ladies, you know, have the privilege of changing their minds."

William looked reproachfully at Emily, who hurt at his resenting, what could be so easily explained, suffered herself to be led away by her partner, without attempting any further justification, and by way of a temporary punishment, joined in Lord Charles's gaiety, intending however, as soon as the dance was over, to convince him, with what little reason he had been offended.

William continued musing upon what had just passed, when the Marquis of Haughton pointed him out to Lord Henry Bentley, and proposed quizzing him out of his gravity. "'Twill be good fun to plague him about Starfort."

"Egad, so it will."

Report had unfortunately furnished them with materials for inflicting a deeper wound than either of them intended. They entered into conversation, and as they passed William, the marquis took care to couple the names of Lord Starfort and Emily, in such a

manner

manner as could not fail to arrest William's attention, "I tell you," continued the marquis, "he would have been here before, but he knows he has nothing to fear,"—then suddenly stopping, he exclaimed, "and by the L—d, here's Aucherly moping in a corner, the very picture of despair."

"With grief nibbling at his damask cheek," added Lord Henry.

"You did not overhear us, I hope," said the marquis, "we would not willingly give you uneasiness—Starfort may be coming to Bath without knowing of Miss O'Connor's being here."

"What is this to me?" cried William, with an awkward firmness.

"Oh, d—n it, that won't go down," said Lord Henry, "we know you are now in the dumps because you can't dance with her."

"Not I," retorted William, walking away.

"What you're tired of this corner?" said Lord Henry, "never mind, there's another unoccupied; I'm to dance with Miss O'Con-

nor

nor next, and then you can return to your old one."

"Nothing like variety," cried William, humouring their pleasantry.

"Very true, very true," returned the marquis and Lord Henry, who now began an alternate attack.

"Miss O'Connor thinks so too, I dare say; don't regard what you heard about Starfort — but he certainly is coming —"

"Don't be jealous, Aucherly — nothing may come of it."

"Though it's most likely he knew of her being here."

"But I dare say she prefers you, so don't be cast down—faint heart never won fair lady."

Irritated by this unseasonable raillery, and distressed at the apparent capriciousness of Emily's conduct, William accepted a seat in Lord Athorpe's carriage, and returned to Bath.

When the dance was finished, Emily looked round the room for William, and now blamed herself for not having undeceived him immediately; she feared it might be a

long

long time before she again saw him, as she was to accompany Lady Faulkner to London in about ten days, during which time she was to continue at Wycombe. She saw him however at a concert, a few evenings afterwards; he was in very high spirits, and came up with Lord Henry Bentley to Lady Faulkner, who was sitting next to Emily.

"We are come to express a thousand regrets," said Lord Henry, "that we were so unfortunate as to call at Wycombe yesterday, when your ladyship was out; we had the satisfaction however, to hear you were all well."

"And now," interrupted William, "we've the pleasure of seeing the account confirm'd."

"Ah, curse it—I was going to say that," cried Lord Henry, "but I shall excuse it for once; I sha'n't call you out this time, seeing you don't know what you are about, heh! heh! heh!"

Your lordship sees well, for one half-seas over."

"And you see better,—for you see double

ble — heh! he! he! — we dined at Sir Charles Westenra's, where we left half-a-dozen good souls, easing the baronet of his Champagne; but Aucherly and I, preferring the company of the ladies, escorted them hither: I spied you from the other end of the room," continued Lord Henry addressing Emily; "Aucherly swore it was not you, but I knew 'twas, so I brought him here to be convinced."

"His lordship has just reversed the case," said William.

"You have quite deserted your party, Sir William," cried Lady Westenra passing by.

"I'll attend your ladyship immediately."

"You had better go," said Emily, "Miss Fortescue is looking back for you."

"And do you think Miss Fortescue has power to draw me from you?"

"I have thought so—"

"Good God! — you wrong me, Emily."

"What are you quarrelling there!" cried Lord Henry; "don't let him have your fan, Miss O'Connor, he'll keep it—he quarrelled with Miss Fortescue just now, and would keep

keep her's—he has it now somewhere about him—oh, tweedle dee's beginning again, and Mrs. Dorrington is shaking her head, and looking all manner of reproofs, at our keeping such a noise.—Here's my brother Charles coming, with all the importance of a Plenipo;—well, sir?"

"My business is not with you, sir—a distressed damsel has sent me to this discourteous knight, who, she insists, has robb'd her of a certain wind instrument, yclep'd a fan, and begs to know, whether she must come to him for it, or whether he will condescend to bring it to her."

"I will return with you," replied William, "to assure her I know nothing of it."

"I'll follow them," said Lord Henry—"she'll be in a famous passion—*I*'ve got the fan, and curse me if I don't cool her."

Lady Faulkner and the Dorringtons went away before the concert was over, and as they passed through the room, Emily perceived Lady Westenra and Miss Fort-

escue

escue surrounded by a party of young men, among whom, she distinguished William; but Emily regarded it not; she no longer considered Miss Fortescue as a rival; the sincerity of William's countenance and the tenderness in his manner, when he declared his indifference to her, had re-animated her hopes. William caught a glimpse of her figure as she left the room, and hastily following her, came up in time to conduct her to the carriage; which gave Emily an opportunity of accounting for her dancing with Lord Charles Bentley; William excused his abrupt departure from Wycombe, and as he pressed her hand in taking leave, a thousand tender emotions swelled in her bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION.

WILLIAM had promised his mother to spend the Christmas at Aucherly Park, and much as he desired to continue at Bath, while Emily was in the neighbourhood, he could now no longer protract his stay, without giving Lady Aucherly grounds for suspecting the cause of it. Before his departure he rode to Wycombe, where he learnt that the Dorringtons were gone to London, preparatory to the nuptials of Miss Dorrington, and that Lord and Lady Faulkner were to follow in a few days, accompanied by Mrs. Lovell and Emily, who were to

continue

continue their visit at his lordship's town residence in Stratford-place.

Although William's jealousy of Lord Starfort had a long time subsided, he looked forwards with some anxiety, to Emily's again appearing in a sphere, which would expose her to his renewed attentions; but his alarm was of short duration: Emily's conduct defied the tongue of censure.

Mrs. Lovell had made several enquiries for lodgings, when a very eligible accommodation presented itself. Mrs. Milner, the widow of an officer, resided in Duke-street; her income being but ill calculated to answer the increasing expences of the times, and her house larger than she had occasion for, she had lately added to her resources, by letting part of it, either to some of her own acquaintance, or to persons recommended by them.

With Mrs. Milner, resided her niece, whose delicate health so frequently confined her to her apartment, that Mrs. Lovell had been nearly a fortnight at the house before she saw the once lovely Mrs. Hastings:

Emily

Emily had not yet seen her; for since Miss Dorrington's marriage, Henrietta had insisted on her spending much of her time in Cavendish-square.

In April, Emily heard that William was expected in town, and shortly afterwards, she met him at a dinner party at Lord Faulkner's. Their looks assured each other, that the tenderest affection had taken place of those doubts which had so lately interrupted their happiness. William's mind however, was disturbed at the idea of his mother's disapprobation, and he determined to call on Mrs. Lovell the next day, in the hope of obtaining from her such information respecting Emily's family, as might satisfy Lady Aucherly.

Mrs. Lovell was luckily at home when William called, and as she naturally adverted to Emily's being at Mrs. Dorrington's it led the way for William's opening the purport of his visit: he frankly declared his love for Emily, and delicately hinted at Lady Aucherly's objections; "these," said he, "I am anxious to remove, and to accomplish

plish this, it is necessary that I should obtain some account of Emily's family—but be assured, my dear madam, whatever it may be, and whether you think proper to make me acquainted with it or not, my sentiments with regard to Emily will remain unaltered—I adore her for herself alone."

"Your frankness, Sir William, pleases me; I cannot be blind to the advantage such a union would be to my dear Emily, yet without Lady Aucherly's consent, I could not sanction it with my approbation; and though I have no natural right to control Emily's conduct, I am persuaded she would not act contrary to my advice—with respect to her family, I fear it will not be in my power to do away Lady Aucherly's prejudice, if you will permit me so to term it. I have no wish to keep secret what little I know of Emily's connexions, any further than it is unnecessary to gratify idle curiosity; the motive which prompts you to the enquiry, entitles you to every information that I can give."

Mrs. Lovell left the room a few minutes, and

and returned with a letter and a small shagreen case, which she placed on a table near her; she then informed her impatient auditor, that Emily was in fact no relation of hers, though for the sake of being able to give some answer to impertinent curiosity, it had been agreed that she should be considered as such.

"In order to shew you," continued Mrs. Lovell, "the manner in which Emily was committed to my care, it will be necessary to give you some account of myself. On my husband's death, I had to learn the additional misfortune that his estates were considerably in debt; my nearest relations were no more, and I had now no other alternative, than either to apply to distant branches of my family for some assistance, or to turn to my pecuniary advantage those accomplishments in which I had fortunately made considerable proficiency. I had too much pride to stoop to the former; I therefore determined to leave Jamaica, and proposed establishing a seminary in England, chiefly for the education of children from the West-Indies.—

On

On mentioning this proposal to some of my friends in the island, I received assurances of the most flattering encouragement, and many of them requested me to take their daughters with me to England. I settled near Cheltenham, and found my plan succeed to the utmost of my expectations. About a year after I had left Jamaica, I received a letter from Mr. O'Connor, a planter of respectable character, who resided near Mr. Lovell's estate, requesting I would take charge of his daughter; he enclosed a letter to a person at Monmouth, which he desired me to forward, in case I agreed to receive the little girl, as it contained directions for her being brought to me.

"I sent the letter, and about a fortnight afterwards, Emily arrived under the care of an elderly woman, who said she was mother to the child's nurse. As Mr. O'Connor had not mentioned what age his daughter was, I was surprised to find her so young; she was just five years old. The woman could answer but few of the many questions I put to her; all I could learn was, that

Mr. O'Connor and his wife had lived for a few months at a village near Monmouth, where Mrs. O'Connor gave birth to Emily, and the old woman's daughter was hired as wet nurse: that Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor soon afterwards went away, intimating they should return in a short time; instead of which, a letter was received from Mr. O'Connor, stating that his wife lay dangerously ill, and requesting to have the child brought to him at Bristol. The nurse set out, and on her arrival was informed, that Mrs. O'Connor was dead, and that Mr. O'Connor was going immediately to Jamaica; she was therefore requested to take care of the child till he sent further directions, and was promised to be amply repaid for her trouble.

"Though I had no doubt," continued Mrs. Lovell, "that the woman believed what she told me, yet I confess, I did not give implicit credit to the whole story — in short, I was persuaded that Emily was the natural child of Mr. O'Connor. This circumstance, and more particularly her tender

der age, made me at first, consider how far it would be prudent to undertake the charge; but her engaging manners pleaded in her favour, and as there appeared to be no other asylum for her, I consented that she should remain with me.

"For two years I regularly received liberal remittances from Mr. O'Connor, and solicitous letters concerning Emily's health and education — several months now elapsed without hearing from him, when to my surprize, I received this letter — read it, Sir William, and you will then know every thing that I do, for though I wrote several letters to Mr. O'Connor, entreating further explanation, they were always answered by his requesting me not to urge him to break a sacred, promise."

'Jamaica, 3d Dec. 1795.

'My dear Madam,

'Your last letter contained such a favourable account of your little charge as was exceedingly gratifying to me: you may perhaps deem me somewhat cold in my expressions of regard for her, yet believe me,

 when

when I affirm, I take a lively interest in her happiness.

'You will, I fear, accuse me of negligence for omitting to write you by the July fleet or the subsequent packets, but the omission was occasioned by an event, which makes it necessary that I should now throw off a character I have so long assumed—I am not the father of Emily—your indignation will, perhaps, be excited by the imposition which has been practised; I trust, however, you will allow the kind interest you feel for this little girl, and the peculiar circumstances attending her unhappy parents, to plead in extenuation.

'Emily is the natural child of a gentleman of fortune—her mother a lady of high rank—it is unnecessary to enter into particulars—reasons of a powerful nature existed—still exist—demanding inviolable secrecy. All attempts to discover the names of Emily's parents would prove ineffectual—the secret rests with me alone.

'Emily's mother has been dead about two years, and her surviving parent, my much

much valued friend, scarcely a month ago, after a lingering illness, breathed his last in my arms: my constant attendance upon him must be my excuse for not writing you before; but be assured, Emily was not forgotten: she was ever uppermost in her father's thoughts; in his last moments, he offered up prayers to heaven for her happiness. Your letters, my dear madam, have contained such warm expressions of regard for Emily, that in the midst of his self-reproaches, it was his greatest consolation that she had so kind a friend in you, and being satisfied you would not withdraw your protection, he leaves her in your hands, and commits her to your entire care and guardianship. This, perhaps, may be considered as taking an advantage of your benevolence, but as it proceeds from the anxiety of a father, I feel assured you will not withhold your pardon. It is necessary that I should now speak of pecuniary matters; you have already acknowledged Emily's father liberal, in your thanks to me, and you will not, I trust, think him un-

mindful of his daughter's welfare, when I inform you he has left in my hands a sufficient sum to purchase an annuity of two hundred pounds, and as a mark of his gratitude and esteem for you, he desires your acceptance of five hundred pounds.

'A few hours before his death, he drew from his bosom a miniature; this, said he, I wish to send my daughter — it is her mother's picture, taken when she was scarcely seventeen: I have been considering how far it might lead to discovery, but I have that confidence in Mrs. Lovell, that I will trust to her honour, rather than withhold from Emily what she may prize above all I can give. He looked earnestly at it for some time, then pressed it to his lips, and seemed much agitated as he put it into my hands — I have carefully put it up, and trust you will safely receive it with this packet.'

The letter then concluded with directions respecting the purchase and application of the annuity.

William was now impatient to see the picture.

It

It was somewhat faded, yet exhibited a lovely countenance, expressive of intelligence and sensibility.

William endeavoured to trace a resemblance to the idol of his heart, but except in the complexion, and the colour of the hair and eyes, he agreed with Mrs. Lovell there was little, if any, similarity. He returned the letter with a sigh, and continued gazing on the miniature — the tale deeply interested him, and he longed more ardently than ever to take the deserted Emily to his bosom.

The oftener he saw her, the more he felt convinced it would be impossible to relinquish her. He laid before Emily the undisguised sentiments of his heart — with transport did he press her to his breast, and kiss her trembling lips as she blushingly avowed her love. The circumstances which had for a time estranged them from each other, now afforded proof of the sincerity of their attachment; and as Miss Fortescue had begun a flirtation with Lord Starfort, it displayed her character in its true light. "Could you," said William, "be jealous,

even

even for a moment, of such a woman? artful, I own she is, but on me, her arts were lost; for opposed to the bold advances of Miss Fortescue, was the lovely modesty of my Emily — need I add, how completely the picture was in your favour."

As William was not yet of age, he judged it best to wait the arrival of that period, before he acquainted his mother with his unalterable attachment for Emily: he well knew she would be able to urge a thousand arguments against such a union; but satisfied that reason approved his choice, he resolutely determined to be the arbiter of his own happiness.

The Dorrington family left town this summer earlier than usual, and accompanied Lord and Lady Dorrington to Langony Abbey, where they continued till the middle of July.

Emily

Emily had as yet seen but little of Mrs. Lovell's new friends, but was prepared to be highly pleased with their acquaintance. Mrs. Milner was nearly seventy years of age, she had been married early in life, and having been the companion of her husband in various campaigns, her conversation abounded in anecdote, the most entertaining and instructive.

Emily however was more captivated by Mrs. Hastings, whose reserve, by degrees wearing away, discovered a mind richly stored with every amiable quality. Her features were evidently cast in a beautiful mould, though early sorrow had made deep impressions, and imparted an air of pensive dignity; yet at times there was an animated fire in her eye which little accorded with the expression of her countenance. It was very evident, both Mrs. Hastings and her aunt had seen better days, and though she was reserved upon the subject of her past life, it appeared rather from a wish not to advert to a painful retrospect, than from a desire of concealing any part of it from her amiable

 friends:

friends: much as they felt interested, Mrs. Lovell and Emily delicately repressed their curiosity; Mrs. Milner perceived this, and took an opportunity of giving them the information so much desired.

"Her mother," said Mrs. Milner, "was my only sister; on her death-bed, she bequeathed her orphan child to me: Captain Stephens, her father, lost his life in the service of his country—honour was all he had gained; and his blessing all he had to leave his little Laura. Her education was a source of the greatest amusement to me, and Colonel Milner took an equal interest with me in our adopted child: wherever we went, the first masters were procured to attend her, and she had the advantage of finishing her education at a seminary of distinguished celebrity. Colonel Milner, alas, lived not to witness the beautiful child transformed into a lovely and accomplished woman; he had been imprudent with regard to pecuniary concerns, but a handsome independence was secured to me by our marriage settlement.

"Accustom'd

"Accustom'd to a change of residence, I was attached to none in particular; my friends however chiefly resided in London, but before I settled here, I proposed visiting several places of note, which I had never seen; among these, were Edinburgh and Dublin—our tour was plann'd, and we arrived in Ireland in health and spirits—how different, alas! was our departure six years afterwards.

"An agreeable society induced us to prolong our stay in Dublin several months, and gratified by the admiration Laura excited, I inconsiderately entered into all its gaieties. As summer advanced, we intended to pursue our tour; but I was now alarm'd for my dear Laura's health: she was delicately formed, and fearing her constitution had suffered from late hours, a regular mode of life was immediately adopted; but no alteration for the better appeared—my anxiety increased—I could not help reproaching myself with being in some measure accessary to her indisposition: little did I suspect the real cause—I had indeed observed the atten-

tions of Frederick Hastings among other young men of fashion, but had no reason to suppose a serious attachment had been formed; judge my surprize then, when her situation obliged her to confess a clandestine marriage: she implored my forgiveness, and earnestly entreated me to assist her in concealing the affair for the present. You may imagine, my dear Mrs. Lovell, how repugnant such a request was to my feelings, but the critical situation of my beloved Laura, whose agitated mind threatened serious consequences, made me sacrifice every other consideration.

"I knew Mr. Hastings to be a man of honour, and was assured, that the circumstances which rendered concealment necessary, arose solely from prudential motives: his father had been married twice, and by his first wife had an only child, a daughter, who had long considered herself the heiress of her father's large estates; she was married to a man of family, and already taught her eldest son to look forwards to his grandfather's possessions, when the old gentleman

married

married again, and the birth of a son destroyed her expectations. From that hour, she conceived the most unjust hatred towards her infant brother; and as he grew up, she found it no difficult matter to prejudice her father against him: he was a man of a capricious and violent temper, and so successful was she in her plans, that he often threatened, and once or twice took steps towards disinheriting his injured son.

"The Hastings family were rigid catholics, and Frederick being entirely dependant on his father, well knew that were his marriage with a protestant to come to his sister's knowledge, he would have every thing to dread from her malignity; and as his father was upwards of eighty, and very infirm, it was not expected he could live many months: under these circumstances therefore, it was of the greatest importance that his marriage with Laura, should be kept secret till his father's death.

"My niece having unburthened her mind, by degrees recovered her spirits, and we took leave of our friends, letting them

understand,

understand, we were proceeding on our intended tour. We removed to a retired village about five and thirty miles from Dublin, where my dear Laura gave birth to a lovely little girl. Frederick seized every opportunity of visiting us, and, being fond of hunting, his absence from home fortunately escaped his sister's suspicions; indeed our residence was so well chosen, and the steps taken for concealing the affair so well arranged, that we had every reason to congratulate ourselves on security—our security, alas, was unavailing. Two years passed away in this retirement—Mr. Hastings still lived—it pleased Heaven he should live to survive his son. Oh, Mrs. Lovell, the recollection of this period of my life almost overcomes me; but what was my grief to my dear Laura's—the death of a beloved husband was followed by the loss of her child."

"Good G–d!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovell, "what anguish of mind she must have suffered."

"Oh, how I pity her," said Emily.

"Every circumstance," continued Mrs.

Milner,

Milner, "is still fresh in my memory. I was in Dublin at the time, on business of consequence. I had a few years before unadvisedly paid a demand on Colonel Milner's estate, for the amount of a bond, for which he had been surety, and another person having a similar claim, to a very large amount, having discovered my residence, made application to me for payment—I dreaded a discovery, and hastened with the greatest privacy to Dublin, to consult a legal friend—I found I had made myself liable—it was expedient that I should compromise the demand, even with the sacrifice of the greater part of my fortune, and I had just effected this arrangement, when I received the melancholy intelligence, that Frederick had been thrown from his horse about fifteen miles from our village, and was taken almost lifeless to a neighbouring cottage.—I instantly returned home, where I was informed, that my niece had fled to her husband—but where was the child!—good G—d! what an affliction awaited us!—the child was lost—stolen by some unfeeling wretch,

wretch, and doomed perhaps to a life of misery and want. The nurse, conscious it was through her neglect, had absconded, under the apprehension of punishment.

"My mind was distracted, scarcely knowing what I did, I implored the assistance of every neighbour; humanity was never more conspicuous; every one took a lively interest in my distress—but to no purpose—the darling child was lost to us for ever. As soon as I was satisfied that the most prompt and effective measures were pursued for the recovery of the child, I hastened to my unfortunate Laura—allow me, Mrs. Lovell, to pass over this heart-rending interview—Frederick had expired the preceding night—she was in a high fever; and soon became delirious.

"Mr. Hastings' family had been immediately apprized of the fatal accident—my niece was too ill to be removed, and it of course became necessary that they should be informed of Frederick's marriage—you may guess, Mrs. Lovell, in what light they chose to consider his connexion with Laura. Her

marriage however could be substantiated with little difficulty—but to what purpose; her husband was no more, and her only child lost beyond the hope of recovery: she had no pecuniary claims to establish, and as to her reputation, we were prepared to refute the tongue of calumny.

"One only of the Hastings family seemed inclined to acknowledge her as a relation; this was Mr. Macmaurice, the son of Frederick's sister, but a military life and distance of time have now most probably effaced her from his memory."

"I have seen," said Mrs. Lovell, "a Colonel Macmaurice——"

"The same; I shall never forget his kindness: he caused advertisements to be published, offering large rewards for the restoration of the child—but in vain; no tidings could be heard of her; she was for ever lost to us. My niece's malady still continued—in her lucid intervals, she would ask for her child; what a trial was this! I endeavoured to suppress my emotions, and accounted for the dear creature's absence, by representing

ing the fever as infectious. By slow degrees she grew better, and I was considering in what way to break the dreadful truth, when contrary to my express orders, some person told her the melancholy tale. Her disorder returned with increased violence—the physician at length gave me hopes of her life, but at the same time expressed his apprehensions of mental derangement—these, alas, were too well founded—I will not dwell on this distressing subject. On her recovery, after three years suffering under this dreadful calamity, we quitted a country where so many misfortunes had befallen us.

"It is now sixteen years since her husband's death, and a smile has seldom visited her countenance—a deep melancholy is settled there, never I fear to be overcome."

Mrs. Milner was much affected during this narrative, and her auditors bore testimony with their tears, how sincerely they sympathized in her feelings.

Emily became every day more happy in the society, to which accident had so fortunately

tunately introduced her, and felt a sincere regret, when she set out in July with Mrs. Lovell for Compton-Stoke, agreeably to the plan which had been arranged before the Dorringtons left town for Langony Abbey.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

THE COTTAGE — A MOTHER'S FEARS.

IT was now nearly a year and a half, since Sir Philip Aucherly's death; his widow still maintained a dignified retirement: she well knew the world was ever on the watch to detect impropriety of conduct, and she determined to adhere to the resolution she had made on Sir Philip's death, strictly to observe the forms of respect to a deceased husband, which custom had established. She had the welfare of her children, according to *her* ideas of happiness, sincerely at heart; and in considering plans for their aggrandisement and arranging her own future establishment, she rendered less irksome her long absence

absence from scenes of fashionable life. Caroline bore the seclusion from company without regret: fond of the country, with a taste for reading, and a disposition ever ready to succour the indigent, she never found time hang heavily on her hands.

The preceding winter had been very severe, and many poor families at East and West-Compton, were in great distress: Lady Aucherly encouraged her daughter in affording them relief, and again obtained the whole country's praise by distributing among them some comfortable clothing. This to Caroline was a source of pure delight, unmixed with any other thought: with Lady Aucherly it was otherwise, for though she was by no means deaf to charity, and really felt happy in alleviating the distresses of the poor, yet at the same time, she felt that these charitable exertions would redound to her credit.

Among the peasantry, Caroline considered old Joseph's family more immediately under her protection, and the children being left without a mother, she was anxious to see them

them properly taken care of. The old man, though too infirm to do much work, was nevertheless able to give the children some instruction in reading: Caroline, who had been confined at home several weeks by indisposition, hearing of this, called at the cottage with some books, which she thought would assist him.

The children were delighted to see her, and eager to display their little stock of learning. Caroline was much pleased with the progress they had made, and having stayed with them longer than she was aware of, hastened home by the nearest path.

In crossing a field not far from the cottage, a cow, which had lost its calf, ran at her; Caroline shrieked and fled; her foot got entangled in a broken bough and she fell. At that instant, a gentleman leapt over the hedge, and rescued her from the fury of the animal. Caroline soon recovered from her fright, and rising to thank her protector, beheld the well-remembered features of James Ross; gratitude made her eloquent, while Ross, with considerable agitation, expressed

pressed his apprehensions that she had received some injury.

The accident engaged them in conversation till they reached the park, where Caroline repeating her thanks, politely declined his further attendance, and proceeded home: Ross bowed, and took another path.

Caroline had not forgotten his strange conduct at Mrs. Grosvenor's; and though his avowal of love was made in so singular a manner, at such a time and place, and unwarranted by any acquaintance, yet from the eccentricity of his character, and other circumstances, she could not help feeling, that it was not to be ascribed merely to the licence of a masquerade; but surrounded by the magic circle of fashion, it had then only occupied her attention for the moment—they now met in a very different scene. The retirement to which Caroline had been lately accustomed, had tended to give a romantic turn to her mind; and the incident which had just occurred, raised certain emotions in her breast, which prompted her, without reflecting on the propriety of her conduct,

to

to conceal the adventure from Lady Aucherly; and having desired Ross not to speak of it, under the idea of its alarming her mother, she felt secure from discovery.

About a week afterwards, Caroline paid another visit to the cottage, and found the children greatly improved.

"And the gentleman has taught me to spell," said the eldest girl.

"What gentleman?" enquired Caroline.

"Lack-a-day!" cried old Joseph, "didn't I tell you Miss; a gentleman has hired my little parlour—'tis Mr. Ross, Miss—from Compton-Stoke—he's a bit of a philosopher I believe, and comes here to try his experiments—he's got all his 'paratus in his room there," continued Joseph, pointing to the door, "and I'm sure I ought to be thankful to him, for he 'a done my arm a power o'good with his *electioneering* machine."

"He always keeps the door lock'd," said one of the children, "else you should see what curious things he's got there—you can see a little bit through the key-hole—come and peep."

"Never

"Never mind, my dear—I am going home now—I don't want to see them."

As Caroline closed the garden gate after her, she perceived Ross approaching, and felt considerable embarrassment at the idea that he might suppose she had been at the cottage, knowing he was frequently there; she was not sorry therefore when he joined her, as it afforded an opportunity for explanation.

"You have been paying one of your benevolent visits this morning, Miss Aucherly."

"I take an interest in the welfare of old Joseph's family—and I have just learnt, that you contribute to their support by hiring their little parlour."

"I'm fond of chemistry," replied Ross, "and not having a room at Compton-Stoke, which could be conveniently appropriated to such a use, I was fortunate in meeting with one here."

"The study of chemistry is becoming more general than it used to be."

"Because it's use and importance, and

the amusement it affords, are more generally known: I am but a novice in the science, yet I already find it a source of the highest gratification."

"There are not many I apprehend, who devote sufficient time to it, to attain any very great degree of excellence."

"In that respect, I possess an advantage — I have much leisure, and am not attracted by many amusements, which to others afford the greatest delight."

"You allude to the pleasures of town."

"Rather to those of the country — I am no sportsman."

"From motives of humanity, I am led to conclude."

"I wish not to assume a merit for condemning amusements, which, in fact, have no charms for me, yet I confess I cannot give any one credit for a truly humane disposition, who can enjoy a diversion that gives pain to any living creature."

"Custom," said Caroline, "countenances many things, which we should consider

sider barbarous, were they now for the first time introduced."

"True — for what custom has more barbarian origin than hunting; an occupation to which man, in a savage state, was driven for subsistence: the *necessity* of it then, carried its apology with it; but now, in a civilized age! I blush to hear *cruelty* termed *sport.* The animal creation," continued Ross, "is undoubtedly subservient to our use, but our superiority ought to be exercised with humanity."

Before they came to the lodge gate, Caroline wished Ross a good morning: she hastened to her own room — an examination of her heart took place, and she precipitately admitted the belief, that the interest which Ross had excited in her bosom was love. — The discovery gave her uneasiness — she well knew what high expectations her mother had formed, and felt it her duty to endeavour to conquer her passion in its infancy; but this, she feared, would be no easy task.

She now gave up going to the cottage, and

as one of the children was very ill, Lady Aucherly expressed her surprize that Caroline did not go to see it. "It's a fine day," added her ladyship, "and I've a great mind to go with you."

Caroline was sensible that she had better acquaint her mother with the true reason for discontinuing her visits, and as she went for her hat and shawl, she gained time to consider in what manner she could explain the circumstance.

An abrupt explanation, would have the appearance of being only extorted from her, by her mother's proposal of going with her; she hoped therefore, something might lead to the subject in their way to the cottage.

"I forgot," said Lady Aucherly, on Caroline's returning to the library, "I must write to your brother this morning — but that need not prevent your walk."

Glad to be relieved from the present necessity of entering on a subject that gave her considerable uneasiness, Caroline deferred the explanation till another opportunity, and

set out to see a poor woman in the neighbourhood who had just lain in.

She had not proceeded farther than the bridge, when Mrs. Mansell's carriage overtook her. The check-string was pulled — the glass was let down, and Mrs. Mansell began a thousand enquiries after Lady Aucherly; adding, "and I'm going to Compton-Stoke; will you go with me, Miss Aucherly? for I hate to ride by myself, 'tis so lonesome-like — and, as you're by yourself, 'twill be a mutual advantage you know."

Caroline who had not seen the Dorrington family since their return from Cornwall, readily agreed to Mrs. Mansell's proposal. — The visit was rendered particularly agreeable to her, as she found Emily and Mrs. Lovell were arrived; and Emily felt no less pleased, as she hoped to gain some information respecting William's coming to Aucherly Park.

"You're indebted to me," cried Mrs. Mansell, "for Miss Aucherly's visit — I overtook her, rambling about, to see the

poor people in the village — but I made her come."

"I hope," returned Caroline, "Mrs. Dorrington will do me the justice to believe, there was no need of any persuasion, to induce me to visit those I so much esteem."

"Ross will be so provok'd," said Henrietta to Emily, "when he hears who has been here — I assure you Caroline he has not forgotten you."

"Don't you recollect," added Emily, "he was struck dumb when he first saw you, at Lady Camleigh's."

"Upon my word, I did not notice the circumstance."

"Then you lost one of the most diverting sights in the world — he had been talking to Henrietta and me in the most animated manner — but the moment you appeared, all his faculties forsook him — at least, the sense of sight seemed to absorb them all."

"Law, ah!" cried Mrs. Mansell, "you know, Mrs. Macmaurice used to call him Mad Ross."

"And,

"And then at Mrs. Grosvenor's masquerade, he stood behind Sarah at supper, sighing as if his heart would burst; she was obliged to make him sit by her and talk him out of his reverie."

"I hope absence has cured his passion," said Caroline, endeavouring to laugh off their raillery, "it's a year and a half since the masquerade."

"Nor time, nor place, nor absence can avail," cried Henrietta — "why he raves of you, and if you had not been ill lately, you must have met him in some of your walks, for *his* are always directed towards the Park."

"It's rather strange that his love should break out so suddenly."

"Oh, he was well aware what a hard heart he had to contend with — so he banish'd himself awhile to his native highlands — but there, it seems your image haunted him: since that, he has been making a tour among the lakes, and lately we pick'd him up in Cornwall, exploring the mines."

 "Law!

"Law! he seems to be always making tours like."

"He's going to publish one very soon," said Henrietta, "through North Wales: by the bye, Caroline, I forgot to send you his poems."

"What have you never read them," said Mrs. Lovell — "they are really charming."

"Before you go," added Henrietta, "I'll fetch them for you."

"He's certainly a very great genius, observed Mrs. Dorrington, "chemistry is all the rage with him at present —"

"Yes," cried Henrietta archly, "and he has taken a room near Aucherly Park for his laboratory — there was not one nearer Compton Stoke to be had — he has been giving me lessons — and makes the study so amusing —"

"And so useful, even to us," said Mrs. Lovell, "that we have really an interest in acquiring a smattering; he has given me several receipts to take out stains — I'll lend them to you —"

"His talents," said Mrs. Dorrington,

"are

"are so various, that we find him of infinite use in the country, where we cannot always procure every thing we want—that picture met with an accident—Mr. Ross took it in hand, and not only mended the fracture in the frame, but repaired the gilding, and gave the painting a fresh varnish."

"Law! how clever he must be," cried Mrs. Mansell.

"The bells too, he has been adjusting—and I don't know what our piano-forté would have done without him—he has put it in excellent tune—but these are trifling qualifications compared to his attainments in literature—his general knowledge—a very scientific man is Mr. Ross."

"He's quite *au fait* at every thing," said Emily, "he takes views, and paints in oil in a masterly style—he's an excellent musician, and even knows something of dancing."

"Then he's a correct classical scholar," observed Mrs. Dorrington, "and a perfect master of the modern languages—"

"Nay, I believe," added Emily, "he

 understands

understands Arabic, Persic, Moorish, and Sanscrit!"

"You make me shudder," said Caroline; "so many accomplishments are enough to turn his brain."

"He is eccentric certainly—" returned Mrs. Lovell, "but you have no idea, how agreeable he is, when his reserve wears off—here, he's coming to give you an opportunity of judging for yourself."

Caroline would have gladly escaped the interview, and she found it necessary to summon all her presence of mind, to conceal the embarrassment she felt in being introduced to one, who had so lately rescued her from a dangerous accident.

Ross penetrated her thoughts, and seconded her wishes to avoid betraying a previous acquaintance.

"Miss Aucherly is going to honor your poems by a perusal," said Henrietta, returning from the library: "but unluckily I have mislaid my copy."

"I have one at Miss Aucherly's service," said Ross, leaving the room.

"Here

"Here is a poetic trifle he has just composed," said Emily, "in imitation of 'the Butterfly's Ball,' I'll read it to you."

*The Sunflower's Fête Champêtre.**

THE *Sunflower* with jealousy heard of the feasts
Of insects and fishes, of birds, men and beasts;
With longing desire to out-gala them all,
She issued her cards for a breakfast and ball.
No expense was too great, no trouble was spar'd,
Each guest had good room, even *beds* were prepar'd.
For the tender and young, arrangements were made,
Pavilions for shelter, and awnings for shade:
Theatricals too, being now all the rage,
To gratify some, she took care to engage
A few amateurs to appear on the *stage*.
Fantastic apartments adorn'd the parterre,
And crescents and circles surrounded a square.
As a fence to inclose this region of taste,
An elegant trellis on each side was plac'd;
Which taught the canaille proper distance to keep;
But all *Waiting-maids* had permission to peep.
And here on a bed, to be out of the way,
Ladies' mantles, et cætera, et cætera, lay.

* This appeared in the Bristol Mirror, the 14th of May, 1808.

The neighbours and relatives came in good time,
Except a young *Lupine*, cut off in its prime:
His widow was longing to join the gay throng,
But incumber'd with *weeds*, she thought 'twould be
wrong.
The *Roses* had cards; and so great was the fame
Of this breakfast and ball, that most of them came.
Lady *Damask* declin'd, a haughty old dame;
York and *Lancaster* too, must needs do the same.
Mrs. *White Rose* appear'd a blooming young bride,
And two budding beauties kept close at her side:
Some *Wild Dogs*, 'tis said, stared them full in the face;
But a *Maiden Blush* gave to each a new grace.
Painted Ladies in groups, to laugh, turn'd aside,
While a *Tulip* looked on with true *London Pride*,
A bloated *Hydrangea*, a hard drinking soul,
"As e'er crack'd a bottle, or fathom'd a bowl,"
Came waddling along with his broad blushing face,
In which, a wag said, there was no sign of grace.
A delicate *Jasmine*, so slender and tall,
Was *forc'd* by her guardian to honour the ball;
Reluctant she went, and left a relation,
Scarcely recover'd from *inoculation*.

"Ah, forced in a hot-house, and propagated by inoculation," observed Mrs. Lovell.

An *Aloe* in bloom was resolved to appear,
Though barely arriv'd at her one hundredth year.
Narcissus was ask'd for, by many a lass,
But every one said he was fix'd to his glass.

"I have some flower roots in glasses," said Mrs. Mansell; "and I *do* think there's a Narcissus among them."

"And it alludes also to the story of Narcissus."

The gardens soon fill'd, and in truth I report,
So brilliant a party was ne'er seen at court.
Such exquisite colours — such various costume —
While Zephyrs dispens'd aromatic perfume.
If beauty and fashion the *Sunflower* could please,
There was plenty of both, but little *Heart's Ease.*
Powder'd Beaux were so spruce, and *Cocks-combs* so vain,
Love in idleness now, had a good chance to reign.
To gain an admirer each *Single belle* sigh'd.
And in beauty of person with each other vied:
But Lady *Laburnum*, so vain and ill-bred,
Met Lord *Laurel's bow* with a toss of her head.
A flaunting *Carnation*, rouged up to her eyes,
With languishing air, every female art tries:
The *Pinks*, her first cousins, more neatly attired,
Were far less affected, and much more admired.

Some

Some *Canterbury Bells,* delighting in jokes,
Declar'd 'twas rare fun to nick-name the good folks.
A youth tore his coat,—was voted a fright,
And call'd *Ragged Robin,* from morning to night.
A damsel, who happen'd to dress rather fine,
Was terribly quizz'd, and yclep'd *Columbine.*
When breakfast was over, the dancing began;
The *Sunflower* led off with a *Rose* from *Japan.*
As the morning advanced, she grew very tir'd:
No wonder, I'm sure, when you hear she perspir'd,
In twenty-four hours, believe it who can,
Nineteen times as much as a hearty young man!

"A curious fact, that," said Mrs Dorrington, "it is mentioned in Wakefield's Introduction to Botany."

The hand of fair *Daphne,* by many was sought,
A forward young thing, from the *nursery* brought.
Polyanthus appear'd, surrounded by beaux,
Chaperon'd by her aunt, an old maiden *Primrose:*
Lord *Auricula's* heir, a London-bred fop,
Secur'd her fair hand, and got near the top.
By way of a change, after each country dance,
Cotillons were propos'd by some *Fair Maids of France.*
An antic young *Woodbine* would dance an allemande,
And gracefully seiz'd Lady *Eglantine's* hand.
A *French Marigold,* who was just come from school,
Appear'd very anxious to dance a pas seul.

A horn-

A hornpipe was call'd for, *Sweet William* was press'd;
He could not refuse; 'twas the *Lily's* request.

While the dancing went on, a set, fond of play,
Had cards to amuse them the rest of the day:
Here many were ruin'd, so high was the *stake*,
And some sat compos'd, who had reason to shake.
No *Thrift* was among them, no *Honesty* seen,
And those who play'd fairly, were look'd on as *green*.
A partie quarrée, to high play less inclin'd,
Secur'd a snug corner, the best they could find.
Miss *Snow-drop* and one Doctor *Crocus* sat down,
And ask'd their opponents to bet half-a-crown.
" My good friends, excuse me," Miss *Daisy* began.
(Her partner she saw was some vulgar *Old Man.*)
" Ma'am, I'd rather not bet,—I play much too ill,
For another to lose, through my want of skill."

A group of gay officers came very late,
All nice dashing fellows, the life of the fête;
But Colonel Lord *Martagon* thought it a bore,
And order'd his chariot at half after four.
Lord *Poppy*, another *field* officer, came,
But when asked to dance, he declar'd he was lame.
Refreshments in plenty appear'd about two;
The dancers remark'd, 'twas no more than their due.

" Dew!" cried Caroline.—" Mr. Ross is quite a puzzler."

" Don't

"Don't interrupt me so," said Emily, "where was I?"—

————————"No more than their due.
And hints of a supper being whisper'd about,
Captin *Lychnis* declar'd, he'd stay it all out,
With General *Geranium*, and two aide-de-camps,
Who gave, after supper, some excellent songs.
A son of the General, was *Major* brigade,
And wore the best *scarlet* that ever was made.
A *Major Nasturtium* was splendidly dress'd,
And *Major Convolvulus* vied with the best;
His nephew, a *Minor*, would sit down to loo,
A smart little fellow, a cornet in blue.

The *stage* now attracted the young and the old,
And the house was soon cramm'd as full as 'twould hold.
Some gay *blades* had wish'd to perform in *Wild Oats*,
And carried their point, by the number of votes;
But soon all their wishes were brought to the ground;
For no Lady *Amaranth* now could be found.
Among the performers, was one whom I knew,
An innocent *bell*, in a habit of *blue*;
Equipt for the farce, in a monstrous disguise,
Miss *Hyacinth* now was prepar'd for the *Prize*.

"That refers to the prize exhibition of flowers," said Henrietta. "and the Hyacinth

cinth is the blue-bell in its cultivated state."

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Caroline, "and I think the Amaranth is well introduced, as it is the name of a character in Wild Oats."

In crowding to get a good place at the play,
A *Sensitive Plant* almost fainted away;
The Countess of *Fuschia* receiv'd some rude knocks,
And found *Mignonette* had secur'd the *stage-box*.
Now *Time* went unheeded till twilight came on,
When most of them thought 'twould be best to be gone:
Their eyes began closing, they droop'd their gay heads,
And tired of dancing, were glad of their *beds*.
Some few stay'd much later; and when it was night,
A lady appear'd, dress'd in yellow and white,
A candle-light beauty, who shunn'd the fair day,
And ere it was morning, she curtsied away.

"That's the night blowing Cereus," said Emily, "and so ends the ball."

They were proceeding to make their comments, when Ross returned with the book, and presenting it to Caroline, she could not refuse taking it, without appearing to slight his poems.

Mr. Ross had never appeared before

Caroline

Caroline to so much advantage: surrounded by his friends and admirers, he conversed without restraint, and treated every subject that was started, in so agreeable a manner that the time passed away unheeded; Mrs. Mansell however, finding no interest in their conversation, took advantage of the first pause, to wish Mrs. Dorrington a good morning.

The following day, Lady Aucherly and Caroline were returning from paying a visit several miles from the park, and as the carriage drew near old Joseph's cottage, Lady Aucherly said, "as you were prevented seeing the children yesterday, suppose we look in upon them—it's so long since I have been there," continued her ladyship, pulling the string, "that I'm glad I thought of it, and 'twill save you a walk for some time."

Caroline thunderstruck with an inward reproach, followed her mother in silence through the wicket into the garden, where the children were at play.

At this instant, Ross appeared at the cot-

tage

tage door—Lady Aucherly hesitated whether to proceed or not—she gave a look towards Caroline—but Caroline saw it not—she was earnestly playing with the children to hide her confusion.

Ross bowed respectfully to Lady Aucherly as he passed by, which her ladyship returned rather haughtily, and proceeded to the house. Here the old man apologized for not being able to shew her into a better room, and informed her he had let his little parlour to Mr. Ross, the gentleman who had just gone out.

Lady Aucherly stayed but a short time, and on her return to the carriage expressed her disapprobation of her daughter's conduct—"I'm really astonished, Caroline, that you have condescended to come to these people, when you must have been aware that a gentleman—"

"Indeed," interrupted Caroline, "I've not been there since I knew the circumstance."

"You might at least have informed me—wherefore the necessity for so much secrecy?"

"The

"The unimportance of the circumstance."

"Did you see him yesterday at Compton-Stoke — what sort of man is he?"

"Oh, a sentimental — learned —"

"I've an idea, I've seen him somewhere before — 'twas at Bath."

"They call him mad Ross," said Caroline, with assumed indifference, to quiet the suspicions she feared her mother might entertain; but she might have been easy on that account — it never once entered even the penetrating mind of Lady Aucherly, that *her* daughter could for a moment bestow a thought on such an unimportant being, as she considered James Ross.

On their return home, they found William was just arrived: he had been a month at the Duke of Montolieu's, and had been much pressed to prolong his visit, but hearing Emily was at Compton-Stoke, no persuasions could detain him longer from Aucherly Park.

A similarity of character and sentiments endeared William and Caroline to each other,

as much as their near affinity, and William soon communicated to his sister all his love for Emily—all his fears of incurring his mother's displeasure. Caroline was his companion in his walks, and they frequently extended their rambles, 'till they came near Compton-Stoke; then, under pretence of Caroline's being fatigued, William would insist on her resting herself there.

The Dorrington party was always glad to see them; Ross improved upon acquaintance, and in spite of prejudice, William found him a very agreeable companion.—He had a collection of sketches of various views he had taken in his tours; William admired them, and requested Ross to lend them for his sister to copy. This, Caroline did without scruple, and even shewed the drawings to her mother, and began copying them in her presence; but she was so careless as to leave Ross's poems on her dressing-table—Lady Aucherly entered to speak to Caroline, and her attention was attracted by the pink paper binding.

"What's this?" said Lady Aucherly, taking

taking up the book and turning to the title page, 'Poems by James Ross,'' repeated her ladyship contemptuously.

Her eye now ran over a few lines Ross had hastily written on a blank leaf, requesting Caroline's acceptance of the book.—A long train of unregarded circumstances now formed themselves into a mass of evidence —and the fear of Caroline's loving Ross flashed upon her mind.

In vain Caroline urged she had no intention of keeping the book: her mother would not be convinced—she insisted on her instantly returning it, and the drawings also; and dictated a cold polite note to accompany them.

When Lady Aucherly met her son, she complained of what she had discovered, and attributed her daughter's infatuation to her having imbibed his sentiments: she then slightly adverted to her disappointment with respect to himself, and painted in strong colours the distress she should suffer, should Caroline be really attached to Ross.

About a week after this incident, Mrs. St.

St. Clair and Maria paid Lady Aucherly a long promised visit.

Lady Aucherly communicated to her sister all her apprehensions; and as they were closetted together, they discussed the subject without reserve.

"Indeed," said Mrs. St. Clair, "you are to blame in living so retiredly—it is that, which has given her such romantic notions:—but how a girl of her sense should be so infatuated, is to me astonishing—have you ever seen this James Ross—what sort of a creature—?"

"Certainly not a bad looking man—but no fashion about him—an eccentric—learned—"

"I'll save you the trouble of a further description—I see the animal, I know his character exactly—one of those clever, ingenious young men, without fortune or profession: with a bare competency, which they *affect* to prize above all the luxuries of life; but if by chance they get into good quarters, they won't complain, and by making themselves useful, they attach themselves to the family

family in such a manner, that they at last seem to claim a right to be considered part of it, and it becomes no easy matter to get rid of them —"

"I've heard of such —"

"I'll engage," continued Mrs. St. Clair, "he's one of the modern philosophers — a democrat, or at any rate a dissenter."

"Disgusting! — Oh, if I could suppose Caroline would ever be the wife of such a man —"

"It must not, shall not be — we must take care to prevent all intercourse between them; and when you come to town —"

"Which I certainly shall, after Christmas."

"We'll soon cure her of this romantic passion; and, in the mean time, you must avail yourself of all the amusements which are going forwards in the neighbourhood, to divert her attention from this mad animal — the ball at Wendover House will be a great help — there are few girls whose hearts do not bound at the prospect of a gala ball — and if Caroline is not quite lost, there will be

attractions enough at the marquis's to put this Jeemes Ross out of her head: — and to-morrow too, we shall meet a very fashionable set at the Smiths."

"Pray give them the addition of Bouverie, or you will very much affront them — they are exceedingly tenacious of their new name."

"I believe then I had better repeat '*Smith-Bouverie*' to myself during our ride there — I must confess '*Bouverie*' adds considerable consequence to humble '*Smith*,' independently of the large estate which accompanied it —"

"Do you know Lord Dalzell?" enquired Lady Aucherly — "I understand he's to be at Bouverie Cottage to-morrow."

"I know he's come into an immense fortune, and I've heard he's very handsome; he's in general spoken well of, but I don't know any thing of him personally: — now if Caroline should be fortunate enough to—"

"Ah," said Lady Aucherly, "that would be a charming thing — but girls *will* fancy they must be in love."

 "Oh

"Oh it's very provoking," returned Mrs. St. Clair, "when young women will be so blind to their own interest — Maria has had several very eligible offers — she refused Lord Effersham just before we left town."

"Is it possible! — for though he is a strange creature, he doesn't want sense — Maria would soon cure him of his folly."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. St. Clair, "but Maria is too fastidious, and unfortunately she has adopted a line of conduct, but little calculated to gain her friends — how often have I endeavoured to make her sensible of the bad policy of it."

"I too," said Lady Aucherly, "have freely given her my sentiments, and have represented the various advantages to be derived from a system of not making enemies — experience every day confirms my opinion."

"But such a system, Maria considers humiliating — it gives me much uneasiness; but it is in vain to contend with her, or I might have hoped to have seen her Duchess of Berwick. His grace made some attempts to ingratiate himself with her; she treated

him

him with undisguised contempt — I felt it my duty to interfere — but she urged her objections in so decided a manner, and made them appear so pointedly reasonable, that I was obliged to desist — I could not advance another argument in the duke's favour."

"May not this indifference be in some measure attributable to another attachment — did you ever suspect her of a partiality for Charles Macmaurice?"

"Indeed, I have my fears — but as she expects a man to be so well-inform'd, I should hope ——"

"True; the Macmaurices are no scholars; though I believe Charles is the best of them."

"It's now so long too, since they've met, that I trust she'll think no more about him."

"It would be, certainly, an undesirable connexion: — with her person — fortune, and accomplishments, she is a match for the first man in the kingdom."

The lovely Caroline, too, Lady Aucherly considered as equally entitled to form a high

connexion: she looked forwards to her meeting Lord Dalzell with some degree of impatience, and by cautious observations, endeavoured to excite an ambition in Caroline to please him; she threw out distant hints for her government, and this she managed so skilfully, that it appeared as if the subject had been accidentally touched upon, and her remarks made without reference to any particular object.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUVERIE COTTAGE — DISAPPOINTMENT — THE COURT-MARTIAL.

ON Lady Aucherly's entering the superb drawing-room at Bouverie Cottage, she perceived by the number assembled, that the company were nearly all arrived. She looked round the room for Lord Dalzell: several gentlemen were conversing together; two of them were Lord John and Lord Charles Bentley; but a third, with a fashionable set of features, fashionable manners, voice and laugh, she hoped might prove to be his lordship; this, however, was the Honourable Mr. Drax, a nephew of Mrs. Smith-Bouverie's,

Bouverie's, who was on a visit at the house, as was also Mrs. Hesketh, her grandmother.

Lady Aucherly perceived another gentleman, who was unknown to her: his appearance and physiognomy were by no means prepossessing; concluding it was Lord Dalzell, she endeavoured to look on him with complacence, but finding him to be a Mr. Whittington, she now saw him as he really was, a conceited, well made, well dressed little man, with a smart face, neatly trimmed whiskers, pert eyes, and a prominent chin. On being introduced, he made her ladyship five or six short, quick, successive bows, and accompanied his conversation with the same species of respect.

"A little of a coxcomb," whispered Miss Smith-Bouverie to Maria, "I can't bear him, he's so conceited — and has so much pride."

"What are his pretensions, pray?"

"I'm sure I can't tell — not his diminutive person, nor his family — and he's far from sensible."

"It's

"It's a difficult matter then, I presume, to decide whether his ignorance or assurance be the more conspicuous."

"Exactly so —"

"What unfortunate devil's this, you're abusing?" enquired Lord John Bentley.

"A certain coxcomical little gentleman, you've just been talking with."

"Oh, Whittington? — the most ridiculous puppy I ever knew."

"He gives himself intolerable airs," returned Miss Smith-Bouverie; "I'm sure I don't think him handsome: but he's so full of his own dear little self, that he looks down upon every one else."

"Ha! heh! heh! he must have some trouble to do that — ha! ha! tip-toeing won't do, ha! he must be always hopping on the chairs and ottomans — I love to quiz him — here, Whittington — these ladies have been admiring your figure — I mean your seals — you've a dozen haven't, you — they're very handsome — and your — buckles are extremely elegant indeed."

Mr. Whittington made his bows.

 "Lord

"Lord John seems a judge of these matters," said Maria.

"Yes, but on Whittington I'm sure to see whatever is elegant—I can't err in praising his taste."

Mr. Whittington repeated his bows.

"Look how he bows!—ha! ha!—he gives us a *feu de joie* of them, ha! heh! heh!"

Mr. Whittington joined in the laugh, "You're very facetious Lord John."

"Well, but Mr. Whittington," said Miss Smith-Bouverie, who enjoyed quizzing him, "how could you be so extravagant in such baubles; only consider what good you might have done with the money—now how much better it would have been to have given it to the churchwardens of your parish for the benefit of the poor—what self-approbation that would have secured you."

"To say nothing," added Lord John, "of having your name stuck up in the church, with an inscription in gold letters, informing all the congregation, that a worthy Mr. Whittington gave five pounds per annum to the poor of the parish *for ever!*"

"I must

"I must take your advice another time," said Whittington, "look who have we here?"

"Mr. Mansell and his feline lady—he'll be jealous of you, Whittington."

"How so?"

"How so? Why the devil, can you deny that you've a partiality for cats, ha! ha! ha! you're a descendant I think of the famous Lord Mayor of Bow Bell memory—let me inspect your arms—ah, yes—*a chevron, or, between three cats rampant, proper*—I told you so, Miss St. Clair."

"I assure you," said Whittington, "they are leopards' heads."

"A modern alteration—the feline species is preserved—the crest very evident a kitten *saltant*, ha! heh! heh!—mind, when you are ennobled, take an African King and Queen for supporters, and for your motto, '*A cat may look at a King*,' ha! heh! heh! we shall presently see what good friends you and Mrs. Mansell will be—you'll help her to all the dainties; perhaps she'd like a devilled mouse, suppose you run into the stable and catch one."

 Mr.

Mr. Whittington bore Lord John's jokes with great good temper, and unable to parry them by repartee, he called him a rattling fellow, and shifted his situation as soon as he could.

"We only wait now for my Lord Dalzell," said Mr. Smith-Bouverie, "and if the dinner's spoilt you must all lay the blame to him."

"We'll baste him," cried Lord Charles.

"He's always after his time," observed the Marquis of Rochdale; "but," continued he, turning to Lady Aucherly, "he should have taken care to have been punctual here."

"He's not aware, I presume, what a serious business eating is in this house."

"I fancy not—but I, knowing what real displeasure it gives our epicurean hostess to come late, made the marchioness set off betimes—we were here the first—my brothers voted it a bore, and proposed billiards—"

"I must agree with them," returned Lady Aucherly, "it's by no means the pleasantest thing in the world to arrive an hour or two before dinner. The conversa-

tion

tion becomes insipid—a general restraint prevails: the gentlemen herd to the windows in summer, and monopolize the fire in winter; while the ladies sit round, taking private examinations of their neighbours' dresses; the young men talk of horses, and the old ones discuss the news of the day, leaving the ladies to support a conversation as well as they can."

"Your ladyship has drawn a very pretty picture, taking especial care to throw the gentlemen in the shade."

"Had I sketched your lordship, I would have exhibited a bright example for our *John Bullish beaux*."

The marquis bowed, pleased with the compliment, particularly as it flattered his vanity in a point on which he piqued himself; of this Lady Aucherly was perfectly aware, and to be a favorite with a man so well bred as the marquis, was an object worth attaining at so easy a rate—she considered too, that her views with regard to Caroline would be promoted by cultivating his acquaintance.

The Marquis of Rochdale was the eldest of thirteen children; and having lost both his parents at an early age, his natural vivacity had been blended with a thoughtfulness, which had led him to form his own character, rather than blindly follow the general current of fashion. His ambition was to correct the degenerate manners of the age; and by judiciously steering between the formal politeness of the old school, and the careless ease of the present day, he justly acquired the reputation of a man of elegant manners. At his house, the company was always select; he associated with none but gentlemen, and severely censured the condescension of many noblemen, who, through singularity, want of discernment, or pecuniary obligations, are daily seen in habits of intimacy with men of low birth and ambiguous characters, whose various talents have been successfully exerted to gain a footing with such men of rank, as are dupes to the borrowed garb of fashionable exterior.

Such was the Marquis of Rochdale. The younger part of his family, unrestrained by parental

parental authority, grew up gay, volatile, and dissipated; too well principled to commit a bad action, and too inconsiderate to do many good ones.

Lady Georgiana, his eldest sister, was married to Sir Clifton Featherstonhaugh, a dashing Irish Baronet, and became a revolving star of fashion, between the Court of St. James's and Dublin Castle. Lady Theodosia Bentley was about three and twenty, and Lady Cecilia had been just brought out, when Lady Aucherly was in London.

Most of the young men were in the army; Lord Frederick, the second son, had been several years in India, and was at this time a Lieutenant-Colonel. Lord Edward was in orders; and Lord Paget, who had early imbibed the elegant manners of the marquis, exhibited the whimsical incongruity of a polished sailor. Several of the others were in the guards, and were laughing, good tempered, thoughtless young men, warmly attached to each other, and as happy as health, independence, and light hearts could make them. Lord Cecil, a twin brother of Lady

Cecilia's,

Cecilia's, had not yet left Oxford, and was just at this time suffering a most distressing perplexity—wavering between scarlet and gold regimentals and the splendid and becoming uniform of the 15th Light Dragoons.

It was now considerably past six o'clock: Mrs. Smith-Bouverie's patience was almost exhausted, and but for the consequence of her noble visitor she would have ordered dinner, rather than run the risk of having her favorite dishes over-dressed. Lord Dalzell was at length announced, and made some awkward apologies for being so late. Lady Aucherly was much pleased to find he possessed the recommendation of a personable appearance, though his figure was not exhibited to advantage, owing to a certain degree of *mauvaise honte* which he betrayed on entering the room; this, however, was soon forgotten on observing him particularly attentive to Caroline, who sat next to him at table. Her sanguine temper led her to anticipate the realization of her wishes, and exchanging a glance with Mrs. St. Clair, her

hopes

hopes received additional strength; though her sister merely intended to express, that it was fortunate Lord Dalzell happened to be placed next Caroline.

"Your lordship, I understand—" said Mrs. Mansell, pausing on finding herself not heard. "Lord Dalzell—your lordship, I hear, has been at Weymouth."

"I only left it last Monday; it's full of company."

"So I hear—my cousin Lady Westenra is there, and we are going in a few days—I know a great many people there—Mrs. Monckton—Col. Townley, and his sisters—Sir John and Lady Spicer—did your lordship know my cousin—Lady Westenra?"

"I have seen her, but I had not the honour of her acquaintance."

"Dear!—I should have thought—she writes me it's so pleasant—all gaiety like—officers and all—Mrs. Macmaurice is there, with the regiment—so dashy—you know Mrs. Macmaurice?"

"No, indeed. Now you mention the name, it reminds me of a report I heard just

before

before I left the town—it may probably be without foundation—'twas said, Col. Macmaurice was to be brought to a court-martial."

"Law!"

"On what grounds, pray," enquired Lord John Bentley.

"I don't rightly know, but I understood, he had been speculating in horses, and—"

"If you say *peculating*, perhaps you'll be nearer the mark," said Mr. Drax.

"True—I know nothing of him; but I apprehend he does not bear the best of characters."

"Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, aware of the family connexion between Lady Aucherly and the Macmaurices, had made frequent signs to have the subject dropt without effect; Mr. Drax at length taking the hint, turned the conversation with—"Dalzell, will you take wine with me?"

His lordship was carrying a glass of port wine to his lips, when his elbow received a shock by a servant removing a dish, and Caroline's robe received the contents of his glass.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Miss Aucherly, your dress I fear will a long time remember this accident."

"Throw some white wine over it," said Miss Smith-Bouverie.

"Boiling milk is the best thing," mumbled Mrs. Hesketh.

"Oh, it's of no kind of consequence," said Caroline, "your lordship needn't be so distressed; I can remove the stain at any time."

"I recommend salt of lemons," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"And what, Miss Aucherly, is *your* infallible remedy, pray?" cried the marchioness, from the other end of the table.

"Oxygenated muriatic acid."

"Oxygenated muriatic acid!" exclaimed Lord John.

Lady Aucherly, vexed at her daughter's making use of such pedantic terms, particularly as she guessed from what source they had been acquired, endeavoured to laugh off the subject.

"Oxygenated muriatic acid!" repeated Mr.

Mr. Whittington, "why, Miss Aucherly, you might as well talk Greek to us."

"Or Latin, or French," said Maria, "or any other language a gentleman is not supposed to understand."

"That's so like Miss St. Clair," cried Lord Charles.

"We know a very clever man," said William, "who understands chemistry; he gave my sister the receipt."

Caroline saw her mother look displeased, and observed that she had it from Miss Dorrington.

"Well it comes to the same thing, she had it from Mr. Ross."

"What is that mad fellow in this part of the world?" exclaimed Mr. Drax — "it's the most extraordinary thing I ever knew, wherever I go, I'm sure to meet with this mad Ross — he perfectly haunts me — there must be a dozen of them."

"While poor Mr. Ross," said Maria, "may be marvelling that there should be a dozen Honourable George Draxes, who have nothing to do but haunt him."

"I never heard of this Mr. Ross," exclaimed the Marchioness of Rochdale.

"He's one of your pedestrian travellers," returned Drax, "a peripatetic philosopher; a chemist, a galvanist, a botanist, a fossilist, and all the rest of the *ists*, except a fashionist—I met him last summer in Ireland, measuring the stones in the Giant's Causeway; and three months ago I found him, tablet in hand, at the top of Plinlimmon."

"What, he's a book-making traveller," said the marquis; one of those who set out with their knapsacks over their shoulders, determin'd to bear with silent contempt all the insults of the proud; which by the bye, they rather hope to encounter, to help to fill up their hungry pages."

"I should like to inspect their notes," added Lord Dalzell; "for if we may judge by what is retained, there must be a great deal of curious matter discarded—they treasure up every little incident—"

"Yes," interrupted Drax, "what with letting us know when they got wet through; how they dried themselves by a comfortable fire;

fire; what they had for breakfast — and describing the civil treatment of one landlord, and the surliness of another, they manage to keep moving."

"Then to insure success, said the marquis, "a few *aqua-tinta* views to attract attention at the bookseller's window, and our tourist may fairly hope to pay all his expences and live at home a while."

"It's not quite liberal," said Maria, "to apply general satire to individuals."

"Miss St. Clair again," cried Lord Charles.

"Miss St. Clair," said William, "endeavours to defend an amiable oddity from ridicule — Mr. Ross travels only for his amusement."

"I beg his oddityship's pardon," returned Drax, "I thought he had favoured the world with his tourifications."

"What, you hoped to see yourself in print," said Miss St. Clair, "you thought there was a chance of his mentioning *you* in his next, with a word or two in your favour; 'twould

'twould be an entertaining subject for a few pages."

"Egad, Drax, you've no chance with Miss St. Clair."

"But Lord John has, I am to infer — what says Miss St. Clair — come I'll bet —"

"I request, interrupted Maria, "that I may not be the subject of any bet — unless you mean to rank me with your horses and dogs."

"Upon the word of a gentleman then, I declare I had no such intention — by the bye, shall you be at the races? your cousin of Montolieu is to run his Pegasus against Major Syke's Black Bess."

"Has Sykes got his bay mare now?" enquired Lord John.

"No: Devereux plagued him out of her. He'd never let the major rest till he parted with her."

"The duke has very high bets depending," said William; "he expects to retrieve all his losses."

"The devil he does — take my word for it he'll be disappointed. Pegasus is no match for

for Black Bess — she won the sweepstakes at Brighton last year."

"You've been at the duke's lately, haven't you, Aucherly?"

"I spent a month there; they had a house full of company."

"Ah, they've always lots of people."

"Can any one tell me where I can get a good brace of pointers," cried Lord Charles.

"Yes — I believe *I* can," said Drax; "you know Jones, don't you?"

"Jones of the seventeenth?"

"No: I mean Octavius Jones, a friend of the duke's. I thought every body knew him — why you know the duke — and you might just as soon expect to see him without a nose, as without Jones at his elbow."

"Heh! heh! heh! Yes, I know him."

"It must be a pleasant thing for Mr. Jones, to have a seat constantly at the duke's table," said Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, taking off a variety of rings and immersing her hands in her finger-glass.

"Oh, they've always been great friends you know," said Drax "they were abroad

together,

together, and Jones is a very agreeable companion."

"And perhaps," observed Lord John, "it's rather convenient to Jones."

"Not unlikely."

"He has been very wild," added Mrs. St. Clair, "and has run out of a large fortune —"

"I heard he had disappeared lately," said Mr. Whittington, "and had taken to live within *certain rules.*"

"Ah, poor fellow, yes," replied Drax: "he got cursedly hamper'd by a paltry scoundrel of a tradesman — I was excessively sorry to hear of it — he's a most particular friend of mine — a very worthy fellow — good heart as ever lived."

Mr. Drax might have added, that while he had been often at a loss how to dispose of an idle hour, *this good heart* was suffered to remain some months in the King's Bench, without one visit from its *most particular friend.*

"'Twas reported," said Mrs. St. Clair, "that some conduct not very much to Mr.

Jones's

Jones's credit, was the occasion of his getting into that dilemma; indeed I've always understood him to be a very dissipated — unprincipled —"

"G—d bless you! what Octavius Jones!" cried Drax, "I don't know a pleasanter fellow — he's a general favorite; Oh, I'm sure when you know him better, you'll alter your opinion — you don't think so — well, I acknowledge he has done many things — very foolish — but he has a good heart — a pleasant good tempered fellow as ever lived, is Jones —"

"I don't know how to account for it," said Mrs. St Clair, "but good hearts and bad actions seem to go very often together."

"Ah, a very good fellow is Jones," continued his eulogist, "I shall be writing to him in a few days, and I'll remember your pointers, Lord Charles — I know he has a capital breed."

"And what an excellent judge of horses he is — I recollect a famous hunter he had —"

"Yes, I know a man in the fourth, who offered

offered five hundred guineas for her — he has since sold her to the Prince."

The conversation of the gentlemen, in spite of the marquis's efforts to render it more general, now turning entirely on hunting, racing, boxing, &c. the ladies withdrew, and a considerable time elapsed before the gentlemen again sought their company. The marquis and Lord Dalzell were the first to obey the summons from the drawing-room; the rest dropt in, two or three at a time, indicating that their return was not by general consent.

Lord Dalzell was coming up to Caroline, when Mrs. Smith-Bouverie proposed cards to him, and Lady Aucherly was not a little disappointed to see him quietly sit down to whist. Mrs. Hesketh was his partner, which particularly excited the risibility of Mr. Drax.

"For God's sake Miss Aucherly, look at that table; Dalzell and my great grandmother, ha! ha! ha! what an interesting interchange of dumb shew, approving smiles, and mysterious screwings of the mouth:

mouth: she's so delighted with cards, that we play every night—notwithstanding she is grown very religious."

"She's very old—is she not?"

"She looks a thousand," said Lord Charles.

"Yes—she is within a hundred or two," said Drax gravely, "and having all her faculties wonderfully perfect, you may suppose what interesting particulars she gives of days of yore; but joking apart, she is really ninety-six, and dwells with great pleasure on having been present at three coronations; she even talks of Queen Anne, affecting to have a sort of 'solemn recollection of an old lady in black velvet'—then she is never tired of describing the manners of her day—indeed she has seen a great deal of high life, and knows all the old great people, and has such a value and regard for my lord this, and my lady that—then she has *so many* very dear friends, and *so many* who are *only* the best creatures in the world. She was once, I'm told, a very gay woman—rouged, and all that sort of thing, and was considered very witty and sensible; but since she arrived

rived at the age of eighty, she has commenced an evangelical acquaintance — reads all the good books —"

"And doubtless," said Miss St. Clair, "but for her passion for cards, would be class'd among the *pietists*."

"There's the rub," continued Drax; "but she's very saintly for all that, and never says she'll do a thing, without the qualification of a 'God willing;' there was a time when she did not scruple adorning her conversation with 'My God!' by way of exclamation; as she grew older, it came to 'Good God!' and she has now changed it into 'Thank God' — and this 'Thank God' she is become so fond of, that she can hardly express herself without it — last night we play'd whist with her till we were tired to death, and on my aunt's supposing she would not like to play any more, the old mouser mumbled out her 'Oh thank God, I can play another rubber.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! don't you think Miss Aucherly," said Lord Charles, "we've had enough of Drax's great grandmother."

 "Has

"Has your lordship any thing more amusing to propose?"

"What think you of her partner? You're not aware what a treat you have before you."

"Dalzell's so nervous," said Drax, "the least thing discomposes him; my hand by accident just now rested on the back of his chair, and he repeatedly turn'd round his head, till I was humane enough to remove my impertinent paw."

"Now Miss St. Clair," cried Lord Charles, "do look at his fidgetty lordship—he's sorting his cards—observe how exact he is; he first divides them black and red, black and red—now he puts all the gentry on their feet, and turns up the pips of the others as they ought to be."

"And then," added Drax, "places them in numerical order, while his party are waiting for him to play."

"It's a great misfortune," observed Miss St. Clair, "to be so particular,"

"Oh yes, ha! ha! ha!—he affords me a wonderful source of amusement. I know," continued Drax, "he's perfectly miserable

because

because one of his markers is a trifle larger than the rest — and I'm told he never goes to bed without touching a particular bannister on the stairs — and one night, ha! ha! ha! he forgot it, till he was in bed, ha! ha! ha! he couldn't sleep, till he got up and paid his accustomed respects to the favoured bannister, ha! ha! ha!"

"And so apprehensive is he of taking cold," added Lord Charles, "that he has his hat and gloves air'd every morning."

Lady Aucherly knowing this account to be overcharged, was secretly provoked at ridicule which threatened destruction to her hopes: as soon as the whist table broke up, she asked Lord Dalzell some question, for the purpose of bringing him to that part of the room where Caroline was: his lordship entered into conversation with her, occasionally addressing himself to Caroline and Maria; and Lady Aucherly artfully introduced such topics as exhibited him to the best advantage. His remarks were judicious and pointed, and gave proofs that he was by no means destitute of wit: his eye, however,

was unluckily attracted to the leg of Miss St. Clair's chair, which rested on Caroline's train: from that moment, he evidently laboured under some embarrassment—he began a sentence, then cast a look at the train—added another word or two—looked at the train again, and then brought out, "I fear, Miss Aucherly, I am very officious, but Miss St. Clair's chair is—"

"Thank you," said Caroline, carelessly drawing aside the unfortunate train.

"It's not quite—a little bit is still under the leg—"

As soon as his distress was completely relieved, he was again lively and entertaining; but Lady Aucherly had relinquished all further designs on a man, whose weaknesses would continually expose him to ridicule. She returned home but little satisfied with the visit: the allusion to Colonel Macmaurice's court-martial had not escaped her notice, and about a week afterwards she received the following letter from Mrs. Macmaurice, confirming the report.

"My

"Weymouth,
"My dear Aucherly, Sept. the somethingth.

"I've no creature in this place to tell my distresses to — you've no doubt heard of this cursed court-martial. I don't know what Mac. has done, and dare not ask — his temper has been so bad lately, scarcely bearable — his disappointment in being promoted; losses at play, and now this d—d business makes him as cross as the devil — I hear him at this moment at high words with the adjutant in the next room: the dissentions in the regiment have been getting worse and worse; O'Reilly and the colonel had a violent quarrel, and this vexatious court-martial is the result.

"Have you heard any thing of it from Lethbridge? — for God's sake let me know what is said, for I'm kept quite in the dark — they are at Brighton — L—d, I almost forgot to tell you what makes me as mad as the devil — Hastings has been fool enough to throw himself away upon some trumpery girl — a Miss Newton — he says her father lives near you; do tell me all about them, I fear

fear they are very low people — one of the Grosvenors, Harry is gone into some Welch militia — an ensign — can, any thing be so mortifying — it's enough to drive one mad — let me hear from you soon — why d'ye keep moping so in the country: your silly neighbour kitten-face is here — L—d, how Mac. goes on storming, — it will be a long time, I understand, before the court-martial takes place — witnesses are to come from Ireland — the Lord have mercy upon us all — what will become of me if it should terminate in his disgrace; I shall never hold up my head again — I'll hang myself — pray write soon to your half distracted

CHARLOTTE MACMAURICE."

Lady Aucherly felt for Mrs. Macmaurice, but her own nearer concerns now engaged her attention. Caroline had not seen Ross since Mrs. St. Clair had been with them, and as Lady Aucherly thought it not unlikely that he might accompany the Dorringtons to the ball at Wendover-house, she wished to prepare Caroline to meet him with indifference: she flattered herself she perceived

in

in her daughter's mind a latent inclination to fashionable life; this she was anxious to encourage by every means in her power. She conversed with Mrs. St. Clair, in Caroline's presence, on the importance of respectable connexions and the advantages of high life; prizing it, not for its vain and unprofitable amusements (which, however, she took care to paint in very alluring colours) but for the opportunities it afforded of mixing with persons of distinguished talents.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUNG ENSIGN — A BALL-ROOM — SATIRICAL REMARKS.

THE Marquis of Rochdale had been married about a year and a half, and this being the first time the marchioness had been at Wendover-house, the ball was given on the occasion.

Ross, as Lady Aucherly had anticipated, came with the Dorrington party: it was against his inclination to go uninvited, but Henrietta soon overcame this objection — still he hesitated; for much as he desired to meet Caroline, he had no wish to encounter the haughty eye of her mother.

When

When Ross entered the drawing-room, Caroline was surrounded by some of those who had so lately ridiculed him.

"Who's this queer one coming," cried Lord Charles Bentley, "with a bit of a rag round his neck, by way of a cravat, ha! ha! look at his cape!"

"'Tis mad Ross!" exclaimed Drax.

"What a quiz—'tis the same fellow that frightened my horse the other day, with his black chip hat and economicals—Miss St. Clair looks as if she didn't understand—those long, dark, melancholy pantaloons buttoning over the shoe—look he's coming this way—nobody seems to know him."

Caroline, fearing to incur the ridicule of Lord Charles, had a momentary intention to avoid speaking to Ross, but rising superior to so unworthy a consideration, she welcomed him with a smile as he approached.—"What a brilliant assembly, Mr. Ross."

"It is—but to my mind more tranquil scenes are preferable."

"What the devil does he come here for then?" whispered Lord Charles to Drax.

Ross heard this, and looked for a moment in Lord Charles's face, but proceeded without taking further notice—"Yet this splendid crowd has the value of enhancing the sweets of retirement."

"And there's surely much pleasure," said Caroline, "in seeing so many people happy—"

"Yes, if to *seem* happy were to *be* so—but here, much is artificial—what a contrast to the peaceful village, we just now pass'd through—"

"Moonlight has a very imposing effect."

"The peasantry were retiring to rest," continued Ross—"the cottage in the wood was particularly picturesque; the shadow'd side was enliven'd by a taper, glimmering through the casement, and the soft smoke issued from the embers of the cottage hearth, like a thin stream of silvery air—"

"In plain English," said Drax, aside to Lord Charles, in an audible whisper, "some poor devil had poked out his fire, and was going to bed by a farthing candle."

"The moon shone brightly through the

trees,

trees, spangling the stilly surface of the river —"

"For the remainder," said Drax, "vide Ross's poems, price seven shillings in boards."

"When you next mean not to be overheard," said Ross, "I recommend your speaking in a lower key."

"Sir!"

"Nay, if you are deaf, my advice is thrown away."

"As a useless commodity should be."

"The best advice," returned Ross, "is useless, if applied to one who will not profit by it."

"Unsolicited advice is seldom acceptable."

"Never to those who have too good an opinion of themselves — I am not offended at the remarks I overheard. Our habits of life are widely different — I must appear strange to you, and upon the same principle you must allow, you *may* appear strange to me."

"You are two strange beings," said Caroline laughing, "you'll be better friends at a distance."

Mr.

Mr. Dorrington coming up to Ross, presented him to the Marquis of Rochdale, who received him with marked politeness and hospitality; and Lord Charles, ashamed of his rudeness to his brother's guest, requested an introduction, and with great good humour effected an amicable truce between him and Drax.

Ross, conceiving Caroline must dislike the light mirth of Lord Charles and his friend, entered into conversation with her, in order to keep them at a distance.

"Well, Miss Aucherly," said Drax, "I see we must yield our pretensions to an older acquaintance."

"That's a point *I* might dispute with Mr. Ross," cried Lord Charles, "but the lady in this case, always decides — I can take a hint as well as any man."

Away went Lord Charles, and passing by Lady Cecilia who was in earnest conversation with her brother Cecil, he gaily put their heads together, laughing out, "positively you twins keep as much noise as two people;" then seizing Miss Smith-Bouverie's

hand, he engaged her to dance, with the easy freedom of a person ever accustomed to a flattering welcome.

In the mean time, William was engaged in conversation with Emily; his whole soul seemed wrapt up in her: Lady Aucherly observed them with well-concealed vexation, assuming the most graceful serenity as he conducted her to the ball-room. She had a few minutes before, seen Caroline seated between the Honourable Mr. Drax and Lord Charles Bentley, and felt satisfied that she was secured from any inferior intruder; it was probable one of them would be her partner; what was her surprise then, when she perceived they were both gone, and in their stead, Ross placed at her side. This was not to be borne: she hastened to her daughter, but the mischief was done — Ross had engaged Caroline to dance, and was already leading her away.

Mortified to the last degree, Lady Aucherly remained in the drawing-room, till the two first dances were over, when proceeding with Mrs. St. Clair through the decorated

corated lobby to the saloon, she perceived Lord George Bentley introducing a young officer to Caroline. She examined him with her eye-glass: no doubt, thought Lady Aucherly, he is a person of some consequence, or Lord George would not have introduced him to my daughter — yes, I see he looks like a gentleman, he has all the air of a man of fashion — "do you know, Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, who the gentleman is, with whom my daughter is dancing?"

Mrs. Smith-Bouverie who thought of no other daughter than her own, exultingly replied, "'tis my Lord Abercairn — a most elegant young man."

"His lordship is Miss Smith-Bouverie's partner; I meant the gentleman with whom *my* daughter is dancing?"

"Oh the strangest looking man — nobody could tell who he was —"

"'Twas Mr. Ross," replied Lady Aucherly, "a gentleman of good family in Scotland — she is now dancing with an officer."

"Is she? — whereabouts? — I don't see Miss Aucherly — oh there she is — in the other

other set—no, I don't know who he is—can you tell me, ma'am," continued Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, addressing herself to an Exeter lady near her, "who that militia officer is?"

"I've a notion it's young Higgs—his father's in the Customs at Exeter, where the regiment is, and I heard his son was gone into it—no, it can't be him, I see 'tis a different person—I'm sure I've seen him somewhere before, and I've heard his name too—let me see—Glover, Govier, 'twas some such name, but 'tisn't of much consequence, he's only one of the subs or *scrubs* as some call 'em, Grove, that was the name; I recollect now; Ensign Grove, yes, I'm almost sure that's the name—'twas very hospitable of the marquis—he invited all the officers of the different regiments."

Lady Aucherly could scarcely contain her vexation; the thought that her daughter should have nothing better for her partner than an ensign in a militia, when the room could boast so many men of rank, was insupportable. She now fancied *the creature* looked

looked like a linen-draper's apprentice, and felt excessively mortified at the vulgar freedom which she now attributed to him. Mrs. St. Clair however, not being quite so much interested about *the creature*, distinguished with a clearer judgment, and rallied her for taking up an unnecessary prejudice against the young ensign.

"But he appears so presuming—"

"I perceive nothing but a fashionable, easy manner."

"Caroline needn't look so pleased—what confidence he has."

"So far he certainly shews his good breeding."

"But on so slight an acquaintance, there's no occasion for him to be so free—one would really suppose he thought himself equal to any in the room."

"He's in the right, if by that means he persuades others to consider him so too."

"After all he may be some low creature—I should like to know who he is."

"You can ask Caroline in a few minutes; she's coming down the dance—did you remark

remark how elated Mrs. Smith-Bouverie was—but I could have told her my Lord Abercairn is otherwise engaged."

"So is Miss Smith-Bouverie—to a friend of William's, Charles Temple."

"Oh, I know him, a very suitable connexion—she's really a fine girl."

"Yes, but seems *so* desirous of appearing good-tempered—she's thought an angel among her relations—her mother looks at no one else; and as she enters a room where her daughter is dancing, it's laughable to see how eagerly her eyes are employed in finding her out—she then selects the most advantageous place, and watches every step; and if Louisa has a smart partner her mother is happy."

"Ah, well, all that's very natural."

"I wish Caroline wouldn't appear so delighted—she has no idea of keeping up her consequence—no pride."

"Never mind—she'll acquire it in London. I wonder," continued Mrs. St. Clair, "it didn't occur to Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, that she must appear absurd with an artifi-

cial

cial flower stuck upon a diamond bandeau—there are certain classes of ornament which should never be confounded—but some people never consult taste."

"Or propriety," said Lady Aucherly, referring by a side look to some young ladies in mourning, "their mother, Lady Vassall, has not been dead more than a month."

"Ah, great want of judgment," returned Mrs. St. Clair, "to be so soon at a ball—and dancing too!"

"Their dress," added Lady Aucherly, "betrays as much want of feeling—whimsical mourning, glittering with black bugles, seems rather to celebrate than mourn the event."

"I've been often diverted," said Mrs. St. Clair, "at a funeral sermon, to see a set of mourning bonnets, decorated with black crape roses, merrily vibrating with the grief of their wearers."

"There's no end to absurdities of that nature," returned Lady Aucherly: "I see the Miss Vassalls have prevailed on themselves to wear black stockings—I recollect

hearing

hearing them express a violent dislike to them; and they declared they should not feel *happy* to *dance* in them, unless they were in very deep mourning—such as for a father or mother, or some dear friend—entirely losing sight of the impropriety of dancing at all, on such an occasion."

"And what think you of Mr. Arthur Monckton," said Mrs. St. Clair, "I saw him soon after his father's death, gaily driving his mother in her black chariot!"

"Where there is really no feeling," observed Lady Aucherly, "one would think common sense would suggest the propriety of supporting the appearance of it."

"I think so.—What laughable contrasts a crowded room affords—some of the *beaux* here appear rather *outré*."

"The marquis to make himself popular, invited all the neighbourhood—those are some, who I assure you, are considered in their own circle, as correct emblems of fashion."

"They seem to enjoy themselves in good earnest,"

earnest," said Mrs. St. Clair — "with countenances too sincere to conceal their delight; tacitly confessing what a treat such an entertainment as this is to them — there's one who appears evidently equipt in a complete suit, new for the occasion."

"And another just by him," said Lady Aucherly, "of a more promising appearance; but his active attentions to his partner and to the figure of the dance, are ludicrous in the extreme — anxious himself to arrive at the top, he attentively watches the time when the couple above him may begin, and officiously gives the gentleman the earliest intelligence."

"What exquisite steps he does!" cried Mrs. St. Clair, "but he isn't enough in *ton* to dance so well — men of a certain class must be content to practise ease in preference to opera steps: those at the pinnacle of whim and fashion may caper like Skefton and sport Laborie as much as they please — the animal before us exerts himself to no purpose, while the fashionable ***** lolls at his ease; affectedly hums, '*memma mia*,' and looks

on

on with an apathy that at once stamps him with notoriety, and gains him his full share of ridicule."

"How graceful the *divine* Vavasour is to night!" said Lady Aucherly, "would any one suppose that affected pair of eyes were ever employed on a page of divinity!"

"A reverend fop!" returned Mrs. St. Clair, "I guess his graces are more conspicuous here, than in the pulpit—those Miss Percivals would do well to take lessons of him; I never saw girls so deficient in elegance of manners."

"They remind me of the Simmonses," said Lady Aucherly, "such an unfortunate inconsistency in their behaviour—"

"Yes, overfree among themselves and their own party, with a low bred shyness to the rest of the company—how these girls annoyed you."

"They sometimes made me quite nervous—they were no judges of the exterior of a gentleman, and would prefer a handsome man without consequence, and even vulgar, to the insinuating elegance of an

ugly

ugly man of fashion—then, so completely ignorant how to suit their conversation to different persons—I've heard them speak of my daughter to a gentleman unknown to her, by the familiar appellation of Caroline, leaving him to guess who this Caroline might be—they've no presence of mind."

"But they improved wonderfully while they were with you, and seemed likely to profit by your hints."

"Oh, among people who are not exact in matters of etiquette, and in all the little niceties of graceful manners, they pass for well-bred girls—in point of person, they are infinitely superior to those Miss Percivals, who, because it happens to be the fashion to expose beautiful Grecian forms, imagine it to be equally the rage to shew all the world their poor skinny long arms, with inoculation marks and boney elbows."

"In short," returned Mrs. St. Clair, "there's nothing so absurd as blindly following a fashion, which exposes personal defect."

"Their mother," continued Lady Aucherly,

cherly, " is still more ridiculous, exhibiting that old bosom of her's, with rows of pearl, reposing between her brown wrinkles."

" Ha! ha! ha! it's too bad — and twelve Cæsars hanging round her neck — her whole figure seems spotted with cameos — I don't condemn her rouge — that's allowable — it improves her musty complexion; but her flaxen wig is truly comic — oh here's Caroline — the girls I'm sure are excused, having such a mother — you can speak to her now, her partner's talking to another officer."

" Who is your partner, Caroline?" whispered Lady Aucherly.

" I was just coming to tell you, 'tis Harry Grosvenor."

" Good G—d! that I should not recollect him," said Mrs. St. Clair.

" He's amazingly grown," added Lady Aucherly, breathing more freely, yet secretly vexed at having given way, even before her sister, to such erroneous conjectures, " he's certainly taller than Augustus."

" Half a head, I should think," returned Mrs. St. Clair, " and, how extremely hand-

 some

some he is: but I wonder he hadn't more spirit than to stoop to an ensigncy in the militia."

"It's only by way of shewing he's determined to follow no other profession," said Caroline — "Mr. Grosvenor, my mother — Mrs. St. Clair."

Harry Grosvenor was in his twentieth year, and with a manly and intelligent countenance, he inherited from his father that elegance of figure, which is so frequently conspicuous in West Indians. There was an openness in his manner that was exceedingly attractive; he avowed his sentiments without reserve, and if you could not always agree with him, you could not help admiring him for his sincerity. Lady Aucherly told him how he had vexed Mrs. Macmaurice by going into the militia.

"But what is her vexation to me," returned Harry — "my father positively refused my request to go into the army, and without money I could not purchase a commission, could I? — he wanted me to be a merchant, and sit with my legs dangling

upon

upon a high stool with a pen behind my ear —I couldn't bear it—so the shortest way was to be off—"

"Now your father sees how determined you are, I should hope he would no longer oppose your inclination."

"My mother has written to him, and I must be content to be what I am, till we receive his answer."

"I'm glad to hear your father's estates have been so productive this last season."

"It would be better for us, perhaps, if they had continued unproductive a little longer—it might have taught my father lessons of economy, and as Augustus comes in for the landed property, my father ought with such a numerous family to endeavour to save what he can for the younger children. My mother's trustees have often urged this point to him—but he has never been accustomed to think of the value of money."

"I'm afraid your account is but too true," said Mrs. St. Clair, "and if your mother would take a few lessons of her sister Lethbridge, it would not be amiss."

 "Oh

"Oh my mother's extravagance is entirely to be attributed to my father — he was always desirous that she should spare no expence, either about her person, equipage, entertainments, or any thing else — she merely did as she was bid."

"And that obedience not being *very* disagreeable —"

"True, but 'twas all his fault; she frequently remonstrated against their extravagance."

"Have you seen any thing of your cousin Hastings lately," said Mrs. St. Clair; "do you know he's married?"

"Married! — to Miss Newton — I'm glad to hear it; I was afraid he was going to use the girl very ill."

"How! what do you mean?"

"Have you heard no reports then?"

"None," replied Lady Aucherly, "notwithstanding we live so near her father's — she has been a great deal from home — but I have seen very little of the Newtons since Sir Philip's death."

"Reports certainly have been whispered to

to her disadvantage — an officer of our regiment told me all the particulars — they first met at Exeter, where Hastings flirted with her, till he won her affections — then the regiment went away, and the poor girl thought herself deserted, and was going fast into a consumption."

"I recollect," said Lady Aucherly, "Miss Newton's coming home in ill-health, and she was sent away sometime afterwards for change of air."

"Yes, and of all places, to Bristol, where the Bays were then quartered; Hastings I believe felt some compunction, and called to see her — she grew better — they were good friends again, and the malicious were not sparing of their censures — this is all I know of the story, and I think a man who is the wilful cause of sullying a woman's reputation, or wantonly trifles with her affections, is in honour bound to make her his wife."

"Poor Mrs. Macmaurice feels very sore about it — I've given her the best account I can of these Newtons — they are downright — worthy — disagreeable good sort of people;

ple; but I've set them off to the best advantage: to be sure I never did expect to see Fanny Newton raised to the dignity of Mrs. Hastings Macmaurice."

"They've been married then it seems some time," said Mrs. St. Clair, "how does the colonel like it! the discovery just now, is rather *mal à propos*—but perhaps there were *family* reasons?"

"Yes, if the world is to be believed—but the colonel is too busy about his own affairs, to care much about his son's—he'll give him two or three hearty curses, and then dismiss the subject."

"And what do you think about this court-martial," said Lady Aucherly; "is it supposed to be a well-grounded charge—for I know, it so often happens, that through pique and resentment, and nothing more likely in his regiment, court-martials are held without just cause."

"Whatever may be the private incentives in this business, it's generally understood, Captain O'Reilly has not brought forward his charges upon slight grounds: the colonel, however,

however, has great advantages on his side, and you may be assured, he will exert himself to the utmost to ward off the disgrace."

"This business must cast a great damp upon Mrs. Macmaurice's spirits."

"'Tis well she's so plentifully supplied — for she has enough to vex her — Arthur has been running in debt and can't shew his face — he's gone into the **th, which is ordered to the West Indies; and her favourite, John, is likely to make as bad a match as his Brother; he's with a detachment at ——; where the barrack-master has a lot of daughters, bred up for officers' wives; the pretty ones have been educated to suit them for captains and field-officers, and the ugly for subalterns; they can make shirts, darn stockings, and so forth — and John Macmaurice, I'm told, is for ever seen with one of the beauties."

"But he has too much sense to fall into such a snare," said Lady Aucherly.

"Faith, men of sense frequently commit most egregious blunders — we must not condemn a man unheard; he may be led step by

step till he finds there's no retreating — but I believe it's not so far gone with Jack; he was luckily joked about it, before it became too serious — I fancy he's beginning to fight shy — but there are more marriages talked of — Sir William, I'm told —"

"Young men will flirt, Mr. Grosvenor, and the world will insist it must mean something."

"Come," said Caroline, "we shall lose our place; I'm next to Lady Theodosia."

Although the room was full of beauty and fashion, Lady Aucherly had the mortification of seeing her son devote himself the whole evening to Emily: various opinions, conjectures, and assertions met her ear on the importance to be attached to it; and one lady had the temerity to ask her, whether it was to be a *match.*

Surely, thought Lady Aucherly, if it be for beauty my son is infatuated with this girl, she has powerful rivals here: — if for sense, wit, and accomplishments, this room may undoubtedly boast her superiors; but notwithstanding she thus endeavoured to depreciate

preciate Emily's attractions, she could not conceal from herself, that though the room was full of beauty, wit, and fashion, there was an additional charm wanting — that genuine modesty and graceful simplicity which had fascinated William's heart.

Among the professed beauties, was a rich heiress, whom many a fond mother hoped to secure for a daughter-in-law; but Lady Aucherly could never for a moment allow riches or beauty to compensate for want of understanding. Miss Arundel with a perfect form had the face of an angel,

"Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her eye,"

but that was all; on beholding her picture, indeed, or seeing her at her harp, or parading Kensington-Gardens, or from any other picturesque view of her, you might imagine her to be every thing divine, but enter into conversation and you find her less than mortal — the charm's destroyed; she proves an insipid companion, whose observations scarcely exceed a silly exclamation, or the bare monosyllables yes and no.

 The

The daughters of Sir Robert Vassall possessed remarkably pretty faces and elegant figures, and were universally allowed to be pleasant dashing girls—they rode well, sang delightfully, and their footing in Irish dances never failed to attract a little crowd round them: in conversation they were affable, good-tempered, and sprightly, but lead them beyond the limits of fashionable small-talk, and they are completely out of their depth.

The Bentley family was noted for beauty; Lady Cecilia was a sylph-like figure; but with a giddy mind, was so conscious of her prettyness, that she seldom appeared in company, without making herself in some way or other ridiculous—She generally assumed the affectation of excessive timidity, and when she had a serious intention to attract an admirer, would find some opportunity of creating an interest in his heart, by appearing to look up to him for protection. Lady Theodosia was animated and witty; throwing off all formality, she affected an air of good-tempered sincerity;

cerity; and by putting herself on a friendly footing with those, whose attentions she courted, she blinded many with the idea that she only sought their friendship; but while this plan was put in general practice, that its drift might not be detected, she was cautiously penetrating the character of each individual, to discover where she might venture a more direct attack, with the greatest prospect of success.

There were, however, several charming women in the room, whose well-informed minds, beauty, and accomplishments entitled them to universal admiration; but not one of them would Lady Aucherly have selected for her son's wife.

One had the misfortune to have a father who had been captain of a merchant ship; the sister of another was married to a country attorney, and her brother was in trade. A third was equally unfortunate in having connexions, who, though rich, friendly, and hospitable, were unfashionable, and notorious dissenters.

These were serious charges against them in Lady Aucherly's estimation: for though she possessed great good sense, and had some amiable traits in her character, their lustre was too frequently dimmed by habitual prejudice and the influence of worldly interests.

"The Dorringtons are gone I see," said Mrs. St. Clair to Lady Aucherly, as they re-entered the ball-room, after supper.

"Of course; that worthy piece of formality would not stay out after three o'clock, for the universe; and happen what will, she must walk on that frightful terrace of their's at eight, — I detest a terrace."

"Every thing, I guess, must be all exactness at Compton-Stoke."

"Breakfast at nine — dine at four — in bed at ten; and I believe Mrs. Dorrington makes it a rule to read a portion of the bible every morning. Then on Sundays, she is a very saint — she constantly goes to church, where she's so odiously solemn, she makes me sick — always looks for the text, and utters the responses *so* articulately, and with

such

such propriety—then she piques herself upon evenness of temper, with her provoking placid countenance."

"What a figure she was to-night," said Mrs. St. Clair, "every article of her dress seemed designed to make her look amiable."

"She wears nothing but Honiton lace," continued Lady Aucherly, "because she *will* patronize English manufactures—then to hear her and Mr. Dorrington talk together, you'd think they were a good papa and mamma in children's tales—they aim too, at setting laudable examples, with their four *long* tail'd black horses, because they insist on the barbarity of docking: then, more than two courses they consider criminal I believe, and French cookery is utterly banished from their table—how I enjoy opposition to her."

"That Mrs. Lovell," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "seems a worthy sort of a woman."

"The *treasure!* yes, and not half so like a governess as Mrs. Dorrington—she has sense enough to know the world can't be

perfect,

perfect, let saint Dorrington do what she will."

"What a ridiculous plan it was," said Mrs. St. Clair, "taking a governess with the incumbrance of an orphan child — it's really unwarrantable conduct to bring up a young woman so very much out of her proper sphere — William seems publickly to acknowledge her as the object of his affections."

"Indeed I fear it's a lost case — I had great hopes some months ago, that a lasting misunderstanding would have taken place between them; but that being adjusted, it would be difficult to effect another coolness — that paragraph we cook'd up for the Morning-Post, certainly added to his jealousy of Starfort."

"It's a consolation, however," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "that his marrying Emily is not of that importance which must attach to Caroline's degrading herself. A man raises his wife to his own rank, but a woman sinks hers to the level of her husband's."

"True; but if I could effect it by any justifiable means — it would certainly be for

his

his interest that a union with her should be prevented."

Mrs. St. Clair coincided in this opinion, and suggested some hints for so desirable an object.

With regard to Caroline, Lady Aucherly's mind began to be more at ease: Harry Grosvenor was now frequently at Aucherly Park, and during the races, spent several days there. His attentions to Caroline were too undisguised not to attract her mother's notice; it was evident also, Caroline felt an interest in his favour. This, Lady Aucherly was glad to see, for though far from wishing her daughter's affections transferred to the younger son of a man half ruined, yet as she hoped by his means to destroy Caroline's predilection for Ross, she scrupled not making a tool of Grosvenor, to accomplish her purpose; and with this view, apparently gave him encouragement, but with such

such caution, that he could never accuse her of having misled him.

Mrs. St. Clair and Maria staid at Aucherly Park till the end of October; and Lady Aucherly soon afterwards received a letter from her sister, with the unpleasant information that Charles Macmaurice, who had just returned from a victorious engagement, had made proposals to Maria, and that the nuptials were to take place very soon.

This was another blow to Lady Aucherly's pride: she had hoped to have seen Maria united to a man of noble birth. An exalted situation, she considered one of the first blessings of life: she had not the mean wish to see herself the most distinguished of her family: her ambition would have been gratified, to have all those allied to her, still rising in the scale of rank. That her own daughter should form a degrading connexion, was a supposition she would hardly suffer to intrude; yet she could not entirely divest herself of apprehensions that Ross had a stronger hold on her daughter's affections than she was aware of.

Every

Every precaution was used to prevent any further intercourse between them; but as she could not interdict Caroline's walking out with her brother, nor could she always accompany them, she suffered continual uneasiness, lest an opportunity of meeting might be thus afforded them. The very circumstance, however, that she was anxious to prevent, seconded her wishes, more than any plan she could have devised.

Ross met them more than once, and as he became less reserved, his extensive and general knowledge afforded them the greatest pleasure: but if he excited their admiration on some topics, on others, the fallacy of his sentiments considerably lowered him in their esteem.

William had asked his advice on a matter of small importance of itself, but which drew from Ross, opinions which eventually effaced the regard Caroline had conceived for him.

" Don't ask my advice," said Ross, apparently in jest, " since whatever it may be, you cannot do otherwise than you will do—

because

because what you will do, God knew before you were in existence; and what he knew you would do, you must do."

"How! what do you mean—you don't contend that I have not a free will!"

"You give yourself credit for one, when you are considering two points of conduct; but it was predetermined which you would pursue; and though to you, your actions may appear guided by your own inclination, yet it was also predetermined, that you should imagine you could act as you chuse, and that your conduct is the result of your own option."

"What contemptible beings your system would make us," returned William, "mere machines—puppet-like, to go through a certain set of actions, for which, good or bad, we are not responsible—"

"How contrary to the grand design of our Creator," exclaimed Caroline.

"I do not pretend," returned Ross, "to dive into the mysteries of the creation—but till I am convinced of the contrary, I cannot divest myself of a belief, that if God knew before

before I was born, what the course of my life would be, it is impossible for me to act in any other way than I do—if you allow God omnipotence and omniscience, you must believe the world to be exactly as he would wish it; for he having had it in his power to form it as he chose, and knowing before he made it what would be the event of it——"

"You involve me in so many intricate suggestions," said William, "I am unable to meet the subtlety of your reasonings—there are many things infinitely above our comprehensions, which we are nevertheless bound to hold sacred—you have the advantage in being studied in your system, I have been little used to religious disputes."

"They are always best avoided," added Caroline, "pray let us drop the subject—we cannot hope to influence Mr. Ross, nor can he effect a change in our opinions, while supported by a conviction that we possess a conscience, which approves or disapproves our actions, in defiance of any logical arguments, which may tempt us to believe we cannot help doing wrong."

Caroline said no more; steady in her religious principles, her mind revolted from the doctrine Ross maintained; she at first thought he advanced his opinions merely for the sake of argument, but at length, convinced they were his real sentiments, she could no longer regard with esteem, a man, who however upright in practice, defended a theory she could not but reprobate. Caroline had no wish to expose his errors, but sensible what pleasure it would give her mother to know that the eccentric Ross was now wholly indifferent to her, she spoke of him in such terms, as completely laid Lady Aucherly's fears at rest.

This discovery once more animated Lady Aucherly's hopes, and having now no further use of Grosvenor, she discouraged his visits to the park, and when he came, took care to be always present at his interviews with Caroline; but she had played a deep and hazardous game. Grosvenor's manners were too insinuating not to make a lively impression on Caroline, and the sincerity of his passion met with the return it deserved.

To a mind which considered every other object in marriage, as secondary to a real attachment, it was in vain Lady Aucherly represented the broken fortune of the father; his large family, and the slender expectations of a second son: she was however too politic to express the violence of her opposition; aware that such conduct often defeated its object, and dreading in this case, it might lead to rash and precipitate steps, she adopted conciliatory measures, and sought to accomplish her wishes by delay, and by giving distant hopes; intending on her coming to London, to have recourse to every expedient likely to ensure success.

Before the winter set in, the regiment to which Harry Grosvenor belonged, was ordered to other quarters; the Dorrington family were also gone, and Lady Aucherly once more enjoyed an interval of composure. She had promised her son to spend the Christmas at Aucherly Park, and the season was kept in that hospitable style, which a long line of ancestors had established.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

A PARTY IN TOWN.

THE time at length arrived for Lady Aucherly's emerging from her retirement: London was the theatre at which she again panted to appear, and she readily accepted an invitation from Mrs. St. Clair to pay her a visit till an elegant house in Piccadilly was prepared for her reception.

Her jointure was sufficiently large to support a fashionable establishment, and she took care that her arrival in town should have all the advantage of newspaper *eclât.*

Among Lady Aucherly's plans, for crushing in its infancy, Caroline's attachment for Grosvenor, it was her policy to engage her daughter

daughter in the vortex of fashionable dissipation; and as Ross had been supplanted by Grosvenor, she hoped to succeed in recommending to Caroline's notice, one who might efface her regard for him: but Lady Aucherly was deceived; Caroline's attachment for Ross had sprung from the air of romance, with which her acquaintance with him had been commenced and prolonged; she had never felt for him that glow of affection which she now cherished for Harry Grosvenor.

Many marriages had lately taken place among Lady Aucherly's acquaintance: Miss Yorke had at length yielded to Sir Cæsar's importunities; and, as Lady Devereux, now entered the lists, a candidate for fashionable fame.

Her first party was given a few days after Lady Aucherly's arrival at Mrs. St. Clair's, and was one of the most crowded of the season. Lady Aucherly appeared in uncommon splendour, which particularly attracted the attention of Mrs. Mansell, who exclaimed to Mrs. Monckton, "Oh law! well here's

here's Lady Aucherly—Oh how beautiful—do look at her diamonds—beautiful! I thought she would have had more; Oh, now I see she has a diamond cestus—I dare say that was the old lady's stomacher; and see, she has diamond bracelets above her elbows—armlets—all antique like—beautiful!"

"The tiara on her head," said Mrs. Monckton, "is the most elegant thing of the kind I ever saw."

"Oh, and so are her ear-rings, and necklace and all," added Mrs. Mansell, "I wonder where they were set—"

"I saw some like them at Davies's in Sackville-street."

"Ah, then I dare say—beautiful! my cousin Lady Westenra had a bandeau there—oh, and look at Miss Aucherly, how sweet she looks, and might marry so well—no doubt—and it vexes Lady Aucherly so—"

"Why, what's the matter?" enquired Mrs. Monckton.

"Oh law, ah, you don't know all about it like; 'tis I, you know, living so near them can't help hearing how they go on—you

see

see Lady Aucherly wants them to marry all grand like — and there Sir William, he *will* have Miss O'Connor, and 'tisn't pleasant you know to have it put in the papers, Sir William Aucherly married to Miss O'Connor, without saying who she is, and all, it would look as if she was nobody like — "

"Like what she is," returned Mrs. Monckton.

"Ah but she's a good young woman for all — "

"Oh we all know what sort of a young woman she is."

"Well, you know, and 'tisn't pleasant to Lady Aucherly, as you may suppose, for Sir William will certainly marry her — and there Miss Aucherly is all at sixes and sevens like, between that Mr. —— mad Ross you know, and one of poor Mrs. Grosvenor's sons — I don't know which 'twill be — but I fancy somehow, 'twill be Mr. Grosvenor; indeed I did hear she had refused Mr. Ross, and what makes it look as if 'twas true, I hear he's gone all rambling about again — and there the family don't like Miss St. Clair's

marriage, because you know Colonel Macmaurice is under a court-martial and 'tis expected, he'll be all, what do you call it, broke like — "

"Mrs. Macmaurice is here, I believe," said Mrs. Monckton.

"Law, is she — well to be sure, I believe, she'd brave it out if any body could — Oh here's Lady Aucherly, I must go and speak to her — I'm so glad to see your ladyship," said Mrs. Mansell, approaching Lady Aucherly, who returned her eager greeting with very little cordiality; "and how do you do, Miss Aucherly—law, what a crowd—people push one about so —every body's here to be sure— And what do you think of Miss Arabella Yorke — *Miss* Yorke now — "

"She's a very striking figure," returned Caroline.

"Oh yes, all foreign like — I'm told she has travelled all over Europe—Italy — Constantinople and all, — and her brother is married to the — she's an Italian lady of quality — have you seen her? and there are some foreign ladies and gentlemen here that came over with them — so odd somehow it

seems

seems to me—and Miss Yorke looks just like one of them."

"Her countenance has something of the Roman expression—"

"Oh yes, and dresses so—all antique like—she quite cuts out her sister—but there, she's married now, so that doesn't signify, you know."

"There are a great many brides here to-night," observed Caroline.

"Yes—and only think of the little Countess of Windermere being married to Lord Frederick St. Clair; and there's Mrs. Maxwell, Miss Mellish that was, she's a sweet pretty woman; and here's another," added Mrs. Mansell, as the Marchioness of Haughton was announced.

The sound grated on Lady Aucherly's ear; she had once hoped that Caroline might have graced the title, and though she had before heard that Miss Adair had been married to the marquis, yet as the name wafted through the anti-room, it inflicted a pang she had not felt before.

The Marchioness of Haughton now en-

 tered,

tered, surveying those she passed, who were unknown to her, with scornful indifference. Lady Aucherly could not repress some degree of envy at the good fortune which attended Lady Hillingdon's daughters, and would have enjoyed hearing the rankling invective which broke out from Lady Grey and Greville, whom the marchioness had passed with a supercilious inclination of her head.

"Did any mortal ever witness such arrogance!" said the countess to her eldest daughter.

"She was always so," returned Lady Alicia, "a disagreeable—impertinent—"

"Like the rest of the family," added Lady Mary Ann Fothergill, "they all give themselves intolerable airs—I never look at the Duchess of Montolieu."

"I can't bear one of them," said Lady Grey and Greville, "though the world cry them up so—and the mother is the most conceited, satisfied—and wherever one goes, to have it rung in one's ears, what a *charming* woman Lady Hillingdon is—I could never discover what made her so charming: she has

has been very fortunate, and she can't keep her good luck to herself, but goes smiling about, as if she expected the congratulations of all the world. Do you see how she goes on chattering to the Duke of Berwick—what, has she some cousin to get married!—I won't go that way, Juliet, I won't pass her—I won't put it in her power to insult me with her exulting looks."

Lady Aucherly had not been long in the room before Mr. and Mrs. George Crawley and two Miss Simmonses were announced: she was somewhat startled; she knew old Mr. Crawley was dead, and had left his son considerable property, which had been since, more than doubled by the death of an uncle; but she had no idea she should ever have met him, in such an assembly: but in this, there was really nothing out of the common; for with his fortune, Crawley had acquired a taste for dissipation. He sported his tandem at Brighton, and his barouche and four at Cheltenham; betted with Sir Cæsar—lent him money, and was invited to his house.

Mrs. Crawley had too much spirit to be behind

behind her husband: she dressed fashionably, rouged well, and assumed a stylish stare. Sarah and Jessy were with her, and appeared to have imbibed much of Mrs. Crawley's manners. They soon perceived Lady Aucherly, who immediately decided what course of conduct to adopt; and as she felt her own rank of that consequence, which could not be affected by acknowledging her nieces, she determined to raise theirs, by giving them her countenance.

"My dear girls," said Lady Aucherly extending her hand, "how glad I am to see you: I have been in town but two days, and intended taking a drive to-morrow to pay you a visit — Anna, pray introduce me to Mr. Crawley."

Giddy with this reception, Crawley had not sense enough to appreciate Lady Aucherly's condescension, or to ingratiate himself in her favour, which would be a passport, conferring on him more consequence than the capricious familiarity of his newly-acquired friends. He made her ladyship his newest bow, and strutting up to her, as she

resumed

resumed her seat, began giving her an account of a boxing-match; with a glaring freedom he took her fan, and played slapping his knees with it, as he stood before her, with his legs forming a span of a yard and a half.

All this, Lady Aucherly bore with the calmness of a philosopher: she looked on the being before her as a mere actor, who however, played his part so well, that those who did not know his origin, could not distinguish him from the general crowd of *beaux*. She, however, attempted to repress his familiarity, by assuming a dignity of deportment; but Crawley, too dashing to be daunted, and in no hurry to quit the side of so fine a woman, retained the fan as an assurance to the public, of the good footing upon which he stood with her, and still kept his ground when the Marquis of Haughton came by.

The marquis looked at Lady Aucherly a few moments, as if trying to recollect her, and then exclaimed, "Good G—d! Lady Aucherly — my dear madam, I was told you

 had

had made a vow to bury yourself in the country; but thank heaven your cruel purpose is changed: for the sake of your nieces and Miss Aucherly, you have relaxed from the severity of your intentions — I see they are all here."

"Some of them, my lord—Mrs. Crawley has chaperon'd two of her sisters."

"And which pray is *Mr*. Crawley, is he here — I should like to see him — a dashing fellow they say."

Crawley was within hearing, and construing the marquis's words into a wish to be introduced, stept forwards with, "Mr. Crawley is your most obedient humble servant."

"Sir!" said the marquis, with pointed surprize.

"This is Mr. Crawley, my lord."

"To any of your ladyship's friends, I must be proud of an introduction," returned the marquis, with that kind of uncomfortable manner which leaves a person in doubt whether or not irony be intended.

Mrs. Mansell, ambitious of being seen with

with *her friend* Lady Aucherly, contrived to push herself into her party, by entering into conversation with the Miss Simmonses, and following Lady Aucherly's steps, proceeded with them to another room.

"Law! dear me!" cried Mrs. Mansell, "there's Mrs. Macmaurice — how different she looks; she that used to be all so — life and spirits like — don't you recollect Miss Jessy Simmons, what a pleasant dance she gave us at Clifton."

"O yes, we were delightfully gay there."

"And that Sunday morning you know," added Mrs. Mansell, "with the band and all — what a merry party we all were — such a bustle somehow — officers laughing together, and Mrs. Mac, you know they all called her Mrs. Mac, chattering out of the window to officers passing by, and all — and now to think you know, of the colonel's being likely to be all in disgrace like — and her eldest son married to Fanny Newton — and the Newtons are all nobody like — they live near us — very well in their way; but law, we never thought of inviting them with com-

 pany,

pany, and Lady Aucherly used to have 'em just when they were alone—now Mrs. Newton will wear one of those cheap muslins with a broad stripe—or large sprigs at great distances—now that's melancholy you know; and there I was with Mrs. Macmaurice—Lady Aucherly, I was with Mrs. Macmaurice, when she received the news of her son's marriage; 'twas when I was at Weymouth, and her regiment was there—"

"It must have been an awkward situation for you."

"Oh law yes,—I never was eye witness to such a scene before; poor woman, I thought she would go out of her mind; she was all in hysteric—convulsion like—and laughed and cried and raved, and called him all manner of names—and," added Mrs. Mansell, lowering her voice, "she swore a great many bad words—only do look, Lady Aucherly, how different she looks—"

"And I heard," said Sarah, "she has lately been very ill with the yellow jaundice."

"There is certainly a great alteration in her appearance," observed Lady Aucherly.

Mrs.

Mrs. Macmaurice was indeed altered; instead of a confident stare, animated features, and eyes sparkling with good humour, she now came towards Lady Aucherly scowling under a marone turban.

"Do you know me?" was her first enquiry, while she took Lady Aucherly by the hand.

"I was much concerned to hear of your illness," returned Lady Aucherly, "you are certainly thinner."

"Ah 'tisn't that—'tisn't that—I can't look about me as I used to do—I can hardly hold up my head; I was a fool for coming here; every body seems to pity me; I can't bear being pitied—L—d, I don't know what Mac has done—I thought 'twas best to put a good face on the business, but people look at me as if they saw a ghost. I won't bear it—if you'll believe me I heard a person say 'poor Mrs. Macmaurice,' I could have struck her in the face for it—call *me* poor Mrs. Macmaurice; I won't put up with such insults," continued she, holding up her head, and giving a determined stare at the Marchioness

 of

of Haughton, who sat near her, listening to the puerile witticisms of Lord Viscount Effersham.

"I hope," said Lady Aucherly, "you will not suffer yourself to feel mortified by the insignificant beings with which such a party as this must abound: the colonel, no doubt, will be honourably acquitted — you will triumph over your enemies."

"The L—d grant it; but I tremble for the event — Mac and I seldom meet now; he's grown so impatient and violent, I dursn't speak to him — and I haven't a friend to consult — Lethbridge and Louisa are still at Brighton — he has purposely avoided interfering in this affair."

"He's perfectly right."

"L—d, you wouldn't know our regiment, if you were to see us altogether — so many strange faces; Quantreuille has just left us, and Wilson and Uniacke have been out of the regiment this half-year; Bourchier's gone into the tenth, and Wortham has sold out, and is now major in his own county militia. His father's just dead,

so he's Sir Charles, now; and I hear he's soon to be married to one of your Miss Dorringtons—but I suppose that's no news to you."

"The affair has been in agitation some time."

"You know pretty Mrs. Pytt's dead, don't you?—oh L—d, poor thing—she went about half naked last winter, and caught her death—I told you about Arthur, didn't I——"

"How do you do, Mrs. Macmaurice," said a lady *en passant.*

"Quite hearty," replied the colonel's lady, resuming some of her wonted spirit—"did you mark the tone of her voice, Lady Aucherly? 'twas not the tone a person utters in enquiring after one's health; it conveyed '*how do you bear your misfortunes,*' and positively she looked surprized to see me."

"Your own feelings, I fear make you interpret——"

"Oh, no, I'm not deceived; I know what they mean; I can see through their civil, wicked smiles."

Mrs. Stackhurst now accosted Lady Aucherly with cheerful familiarity, and after conversing with her some minutes, turned towards Mrs. Macmaurice, exclaiming, "Ah, Mrs. Macmaurice, I'm glad to see you — upon my word I didn't know you, or I should have spoken before — *indeed* I didn't know you — I heard you were here too — but, I didn't think — I hope the colonel —" added Mrs. Stackhurst, dropping her voice and making a pause, "is well."

"He's very well, ma'am," returned Mrs. Macmaurice, wagging her head to encourage confidence.

"Ah, I'm glad to hear it — and I hope — I'm sure, I wish him well ——"

"Thank ye, ma'am, thank ye, ma'am," replied Mrs. Macmaurice, with the quickness of a person affronted.

"Did you ever witness such insults in all your life, Lady Aucherly? — what are her hopes and her wishes to me — all stuff — and her impertinence in *apologizing* for not knowing me — what necessity for apology, unless she thought I was so cast down, that

I

I might suspect myself of being overlooked—curse her insolence," muttered Mrs. Macmaurice to herself, while she stared and nodded defiance at the person who had said "*poor* Mrs, Macmaurice."

"Law! what a spirit Mrs. Macmaurice has," whispered Mrs. Mansell to the Miss Simmonses, who stood together behind Lady Aucherly.

"I'm quite sorry to see her so troubled," said Jessy, "for I can't help liking her, she was always so good humoured and pleasant."

"And so comical somehow—oh, do you know where your aunt's diamonds were set?" said Mrs. Mansell, gazing on the tiara—"was it at Davies's, in Sackville-Street?"

"I don't know—yes, I believe so."

"How *beautiful* they are—I suppose those round her waist were the old lady's stomacher—and those ——"

"Indeed," interrupted Jessy, "I know no more than you."

"Law, I should have thought—how beautiful

beautiful —— now pray," continued Mrs. Mansell, hoping to collect information that would give her importance — " I've heard that Miss Aucherly — is going to be married — do you know at all, — because people ask me, thinking *I* must know — and there —"

" Upon my word, I'm as much in the dark as you are," said Jessy, leaving her silly companion, and joining the party before her.

" Law, uttered Mrs. Mansell, in a disconsolate tone, as she looked round to see whom she might speak to, and perceiving Mrs. Monckton near, she put on her most smiling looks, and in order to let the lady, with whom Mrs. Monckton was talking, know that she had a right to claim her attention, she referred to their recent conversation, and informed Mrs. Monckton that Lady Aucherly's diamonds *were* set at Davies's."

" I'm very much obliged to you," returned Mrs. Monckton ironically, " for I was dying to know."

" You're Lady Aucherly's particular friend,

friend, I believe," said the Marchioness of Arrangford.

"We're neighbours in the country — makes us intimate like, you know."

"Well, then, I dare say you can tell me how she bears the match Sir William's going to make."

"Oh, law, I fancy 'tisn't at all to her liking."

"If it humbles her pride, 'twill be a good thing; to be sure, this Miss O'Connor must be poison to her; and what Sir William sees in the girl I can't conceive — then the Dorringtons make so much of her — it's quite ridiculous."

"It's so like a novel," observed Mrs. Monckton, "to hear of a young lady brought up, without knowing who her parents are — I suppose she's to turn out to be somebody at last."

"Oh, no," returned the marchioness, with a scoffing laugh — "*those* heroines are always paragons of virtue, they don't permit Lord Starforts to dangle after them."

"She's a bit of human nature," said Mrs.

Monckton;

Monckton; "not like those very wonderful young ladies who do every thing that is right, and meet with a thousand difficulties in their love affairs, which a little common sense would remove; then when they are at the height of their distresses, when they are quite sure their lovers are dead or false-hearted, they are suddenly relieved from their fears; their strawberry marks are discovered, proving them to be duchesses' daughters, and they're of course happily married — ridiculous stuff."

"Law," cried Mrs. Mansell, "I have read something like that in a novel."

"Really! well, that's *very* extraordinary," said the marchioness, winking to Mrs. Monckton, "but as for this Emily, I shall not expect to hear of her nobility, unless indeed some wonderful adventures befal her — if she is suspected of stealing Mrs. Dorrington's jewels; flies the house — flings herself into a hackney coach, drives she knows not whither; is turned into the street, gets into a row, finds her pocket pickt, is taken up by the watch, and lodged for the night in the round

round house, I shall make up my mind to hear she is born of noble blood—but till then, ha! ha! ha! I shall consider her—quite plebeian—I was going to say, no better than she should be."

"Oh, fie," cried Mrs. Monckton, "what would Sir William say, if he were to hear you."

"He ought to be very much obliged to me for opening his eyes and endeavouring to prevent his making an unfortunate marriage—young people are half fools in love affairs—Miss Aucherly too—I hear she's to be married to some vagabond fellow—"

"Oh, it's all off with mad Ross," said Mrs. Mansell, "I do hear though, that she has a liking for one of Mr. Grosvenor's sons."

"That will be a shocking match for her—they are as poor as rats. I'm told Mrs. Grosvenor is in a horrid hovel of a place, more like a ruin'd barn than a house, by the sea side, in a dreadfully bleak situation, without a creature near them for miles—and only one servant; with all her large family muddling together

together — it made my heart ache to hear the account — stone floors, white walls and scanty fare — but I declare it almost serves them right — *such* extravagance."

"What impudence her sister has," said Mrs. Monckton, "'tis expected the colonel will be dismissed the service, and yet she brazens it out; but to do her justice, I really saw her look abash'd once or twice."

"And well she might — d'ye see how Lady Aucherly *wheels* about, affecting to be *so* graceful — Mrs. Mansell, how came Miss St. Clair to marry one of the ragamuffin Macmaurices?"

"Oh, law, I'm sure I, — I suppose, she took a fancy to him, somehow."

"Ah, just as you'd buy a cap or a bonnet."

"I gave her credit for more sense," said Mrs. Monckton.

"Sense!" cried the marchioness; "some people have all sense but common sense — I always thought her a pert girl, that considered herself *very* clever, and endeavoured to make every one else think so too — she has made

made enemies enough, with her satirical remarks — there's always, I think, a great deal of ill nature in such people: I can't bear ill nature, 'twon't do to go through the world with. — I want to get into the next room, but I don't know how to get through this mob, and I see the door way is blockaded by Lady Grey and Greville, and her four tall spinsters angling for beaux."

"I heard the youngest had an offer the other day," said Mrs. Monckton, "did you hear any thing of it?"

"Oh, L—d, ha! ha! ha! yes — old Sir Thomas Baliol! I laugh to think what the eldest daughter's prospects must be, if she sees her youngest sister wedded to a decayed old baronet, ha! ha! ha! poor Lady Alicia must expect some grey-beard to rise from the dead to make proposals to her, ha! ha! ha! I wonder their disappointments haven't turned their brains — but I still expect to hear they'll add to the number of interesting females, who dress themselves genteelly, and plunge into the serpentine river, ha!

ha! ha! ha!—who's that quiz Lady Aucherly is speaking to!"

"It's a Mrs. Selwyn," replied Mrs. Mansell; "she went to school, and all, with Lady Aucherly and Mrs. Yorke and—that's how she came to be here I suppose, for I fancy she isn't at all grand like."

"Ah, well, she helps to fill the room; Lady Devereux was determined to have a cram, and she has succeeded to admiration—I declare I'm half suffocated, I must move off and get a little air."

Mrs. Selwyn was informing Lady Aucherly that since she had last seen her, she had been fortunate in hearing of Laura Stephens; "Her name is now Hastings," continued Mrs. Selwyn, "and I understand her husband was heir to a large estate in Ireland, but unfortunately dying before his father, his widow was left unprovided: she resides with her aunt Mrs. Milner, in Duke-street."

Lady Aucherly felt a lively interest for the companion of her youth, and expressed a great desire to see her.

"I'm

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Selwyn, "she will take it very kind. You will find her greatly altered: being grown thin, her fine form has lost much of its beautiful proportion; her complexion is pale and wan, but her eyes and teeth still retain their former beauty."

Mrs. Selwyn was interrupted by the loud gaiety of a party breaking up from a speculation table: Crawley and Lord Effersham had been pursuing different systems, and the former being a considerable gainer, was enjoying a triumph over his pigeoned lordship.

Elated with his success, Crawley came up to Lady Aucherly, expatiating with great volubility on his skilful manœuvres, and accompanying each sentence with appropriate action and grimace.

"You see, my dear Lady Aucherly, I'll tell'e what — Effersham knows nothing of the game — the odds were against him you know — he made no calculations — went upon no principle — he might as well, you know, have purchased all the tickets in the lottery, ha! ha! ha! — now I, you see, followed a different scent. I soon saw too high a value was

was set on the cards: ho, ho, thought I, are you there my bucks, with all my heart; I'll try what selling will do — I tipt the hint to Anna, my wife, your niece, giving her a sly wink with 'now's the time to sell,' so my cry was, who'll buy, who'll buy, and sure enough I brought my fish to a rare good market — look here," continued he, holding up and jingling his purse, "here's the gold and silver fishes."

Mrs. Crawley coming up, playfully snatched at it, and insisted on sharing his gains.

"Fair and softly, I beg your pardon, gentle madam, I know a trick worth two of that," said Crawley, extending his arm beyond her reach, "now don't put yourself in a passion; you never see *me* in a passion, and I warrant your aunt Aucherly never set you the example."

"Good G—d, sir, you are abominably rude," said Mrs. Crawley.

"What's the matter?" cried Jessy, joining the party with Sarah and a brace of beaux, who, Lady Aucherly knew, had no real pretensions to the enviable class of men of

fashion,

fashion. She perceived too, that the rooms were now just sufficiently thinned to afford every one of the company a distinct view of the individuals by whom she was thus unawares surrounded; she felt an alarm that a fashionable group near her were scrutinizing their merits, and as Crawley now became more noisy; she could not mistake the merriment of the Marchioness of Arrangford, whose malignant eye glanced at him, while in a laughing whisper she did all in her power to ridicule him.

Her remarks were received by the elegant Mrs. Maxwell with a well-bred suppressed smile. Lady Aucherly observed she made some enquiry of Lady Garston, the purport of which she collected from her ladyship's answer.

"They are some of Lady Aucherly's relations."

Too much mortified to observe how this information was received, but determined at any rate to get rid of the troublesome Crawley, Lady Aucherly dispatched him to enquire after her carriage.

 "You're

"You're not going, Crawley, are you?" cried Sir Cæsar, calling after him.

"I'm only going to know, if my aunt's carriage is ready, I shall be back *immegently*."

"Who the devil's his aunt," cried Lord Charles Bentley.

"Wheugh," whistled Skefton with a glance at Lady Aucherly, "I'm sure she heard you."

"I can't help it—damme look there, what a cursed shame, look at that old cat of quality, Lady Grey and four going without a soul to take care of them—it's too bad—you are the eldest, Skefton, go and see them down stairs."

"Pray stand on no ceremony—I'll wave all privilege of seniority in this case, for to say the truth, I've no partiality for old mammas and lean misses."

"D—n it then, don't let's stand here, or we shall be expected to act the Chesterfield by some old dowager or other—who are those girls going out?"

"What! don't you know the pretty Vassalls," exclaimed Major Sykes, "Jack Skefton,

Skefton, look at their backs! ha! ha! their shoulder blades are squeezed together making a deep rut in the middle; what the devil do the girls mean by it. Here's one that's swathed like a mummy; with a thin drapery over her invisible petticoat, ha! ha! look, by G—d she can't curtsie — I swear she's laced over her hips."

"Over her hips!" cried Lord Charles, "down to her knees, ha! ha! barricadoed, ha! ha! ha! come let's be off — where's Effersham — cursed bore — these routs."

"He's gone to Mrs. Pickerell's hop — do you go?"

"Oh, no — no, no, I never go there — she gives bread and butter dances — I always beg off — I can't afford to dance without a supper."

"Oh d—n it, but the best of the joke is, there *is* to be a supper, and without costing her a *sous*."

"What is she following her old pranks again, I thought she was too well known to catch —"

"Old birds — but my Lord Kilkiddar

who

who wasn't up to it, and got limed. A party was coaxing her to give a dance; his sapient lordship thought his influence might prevail; she seized the lucky moment, and affecting a joke, when the devil himself was never more in earnest, declared she would give a dance if his lordship would provide the supper."

"Ha! ha! poor Kiddy—good-natured soul: this will be an excellent quiz; by all means let's go, ha! ha! ha! *allons.*"

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE MORTIFICATIONS.

THOUGH never less inclined to further intercourse with the Simmonses, Lady Aucherly could not well avoid calling with Caroline to enquire how the old man and his family were.

She found Mr. Simmons better in health than he had been for many years; her visit was received just as she wished, and she was congratulating herself as she stept into her carriage, on its occasioning her so little trouble, when Mr. Simmons, with a thousand apologies for the liberty he was going to take, requested her to set down a young lady,

lady, who had been disappointed of a conveyance to town.

Unprepared to oppose what she could not foresee would be attended with disagreeable consequences, a momentary forgetfulness entailed on Lady Aucherly a series of mortifications.

There was plenty of room in the barouche; and Mr. Simmons conceiving an implied assent to his request, desired one of his five daughters, who were standing outside the door to take leave of their aunt and cousin, to let Maria know Lady Aucherly would be kind enough to take her to town.

Even now, it was not too late to frame an excuse; but at this moment, while Maria Grimshaw was hurrying out of the house that she might not detain Lady Aucherly, Sir Clifton Featherstonhaugh, driving Lady Georgiana and her sisters, in a barouche and four, accompanied by a party of gentlemen, approached the spot.

Attracted by Lady Aucherly's equipage and the singular party in waiting, the ladies stopped to make some trifling enquiry of

Lady

Lady Aucherly, but really with the intention of seeing what was going forwards; which promising much entertainment, they prolonged their conversation, while Lord John Bentley and Major Lamotte addressed themselves to Caroline.

Maria Grimshaw disregarding every attempt at opposition, triumphantly sprang into the carriage, sitting bolt upright in the middle of the seat, after repeatedly rising up and down to make herself comfortable; then calling for "a little passel," which she had left in the back "pa'lor," Clarissa ran for it, while Miss Grimshaw, who was to remain at Hammersmith, exchanged messages with her sister.

"Hetty don't forget to finish the niddle book for aunt."

"Very vell, and mind you bring my old straw bonnut."

"Lors love'e ha'n't I a tied a knot in my handkercher?"

"And d'ye hear, one of my plain habut shirts — not my best."

"But if there bain't nurrer nurrer, I s'pose I must."

"Aye sure, and some pocket handkerchers for I've such a cold, 'tis wash, wash, wash for everlasting — Oh, and d'ye hear, M'rier, don't'e forget my message to Mrs. Tustin, and remember me to young T."

"Ha! ha! ha! lorks, *I* say remember *you*, I shall take care of number vun fust, ha! ha! ha!"

"Well, *you* may have'n," returned Miss Grimshaw, "but 'tain't fair, for he began with me fust, *that* he did; but I don't like his long shanks, huh! huh! huh!"

"Huh! huh! haw!" reiterated Maria, while the Miss Simmonses shocked at their behaviour, stood by, endeavouring in vain to put an end to their discourse.

Irritated by the well-remembered voices and boisterous mirth of the odious Grimshaws, Lady Aucherly determined to put an immediate stop to it, and concluding a well-turned period with a bow to the Bentley party, ordered her coachman to drive on.

Maria

Maria immediately began nodding and shaking her hand at her friends, which she continued to do at short intervals, while it was possible it could be observed by them. After a moment's time for reflection, she vociferated, "oh, stop, stop, I must go back; I left my kays — they'll see all my letters and things; pray my lady do'e turn back, 'ton't be a minute — oh, lor, how lucky, if I ha'n't a found 'em — lor, I'm as glad as if any body had given me half-a crown."

Lady Aucherly and Caroline unwilling to encourage her conversation, merely bowed.

"Well I do think," continued Maria, taking the discoloured fragment of an apple from her pocket, and biting a piece, "this is the pleasantest carriage I ever rid in — all open; I say Miss Archerly, we can see and be seen — four hosses 'ou'd a been more dashy, 'ou'dn't it — but there, I suppose, *now* — you — don't — pray my lady," continued Maria, returning the apple to her pocket, "do'e know any charm to drive away warts; only feel here, did'e ever see

such warts as I have, not a finger without 'em — and there Hetty's hands be as bad in another way; wuss I think — she's got chilblains shocking — they be all broke and sore you know, terrible: and as for me I've got 'em so bad in my feet, I can't walk an inch, else I 'ou'dn't a mind tramping to town this fine weather — 'tain't five miles — lor, how lucky t'was your coming, for 'tis a hawkerd time o'day to take the chance of the stage."

Lady Aucherly reclining in one corner of the carriage was devising a plan for extricating herself from her disagreeable companion: after the intimation of lameness she feared she could not put her out before they came to Kensington; there, a hackney coach might be procured, and in the mean time, she considered the best pretence for taking her no further.

Unluckily, not a coach was on the stand: the barouche drove through the town.

"Lar," cried Maria eagerly, "lar, here's a berrin, look, look, augh 'tain't much after the rate, is it? lor, I see the day before isterday the beautiful'st coffin went in next door

to

to us, you can't think—'twas for a young man as we know very well; we were there about a fortnight ago, and he looked just as well as you or I, and there now to think you know—lar it make's one's very blood curdle, don't it you? This ain't nothing of a berrin, is it? Lar! here's the hearse! only two charrots; 'tis a melancholy sight though, ain't it?" continued Maria, gazing intently at it, with her mouth open, as it passed, while she softly exclaimed, "lar—lar—lar how it makes one—my blood do creep so—lor, how shocking 'tis to think there's a dead body in it—why how long has poor Sir Philup been dead—it's a year and a half, ain't it? ah, that 'tis—more—there we must all die one day or other—'*Our time is short, we'd better pray, for we must die and turn to clay.*'—Lor, look at that there young chap; there now, that's Bill Perry—my! how smart we be; all but they gaiters—lor, your high-flying bucks don't wear them things, do 'em? I'll lay a penny he don't know me in this carriage—no, nor he don't neither, ha! ha! ha! do you know, Miss Archerly, he

he has had a hankering after me these two year; he sent me a very pretty volontine once; but lor, I do look higher than he — and Franky Morgan too, for the matter of that; besides I'a' heard a' odd story of him, about a love child — why lor, mother says, father could give me a fort'n any day of ten thousand pound, and as much more when he's dead, besides providing for mother, Tom, and Hetty just as well — why lar, I do think all the world's taking hairings to-day, 'tis so pleasant, 'tis like summer, and every body looks so gay and happy, don't 'em."

Lady Aucherly felt far otherwise than gay and happy; a fatality seemed to pursue her, involving her in continual mortifications.

"Why gracious me! where be your eyes, my lady, look out yander — dont'e see, there's somebody bowing to us — lar if I don' think 'tis lard what's his name — one of they that was with us that day, don't you remember, you know, as we all went into the fruit-shop in Bond-street — Lennard! that was the name: ah, and '*tis* he too — lor, and there do

you

you know a day or two after, Hetty and I was walking out with cousin Hancock, and there we met him and the t'other handsome young fellor, great cronies, bain't 'em? he's a quare one — and there they was so purlite as to ask us how we was, and hoped I wasn't hurted from the fall I had in Bond-street, you know — 'twas a hawkerd affair that — but there Hetty says I fell very decent. Lor, and there do you know another smart young chap join'd 'em and they seemed all so pleasant and merry: and there they ou'd keep folloring us all along Piccurdilly; then sometimes they'd come up and speak; lor, I never see such comical fellows, not I — then they was so mighty curious, wanting to know all and about our knowing you, and whether we wasn't related; so I said you and mother was very old friends; that was a good un, wasn't it? and Hetty just out of fun you know, sh' she, 'Oh lars love'e, iss sure,' sh' she, 'they be cousin jarmans; huh! huh! huh! that was a bouncer; lor I thought I should a' bust — and now, he seeing us together, you know, he'll think — huh! huh!

huh! huh!—and so lar there you know they kept with us, till we came into Cranburn-Alley, and there they began quite a flirtation—I didn't like it—they went a little too fur, and so I told 'em —to be sure they was very insinivating that they was, but Hetty at last grew quite frumpish, and told 'em she didn't want none of their wicked palaver, and wondered they wasn't ashamed of their-selves. And as for Shukey, lor if they didn't make downright love to her; she didn't know what to make of 'em 'gentlemen,' sh' she, if you *be* gentlemen, please to behave yourselves as such; I can tell 'e, sh' she, 'we bain't what you take us for, nor we don't want none such as you,' sh' she, 'to be dangling after us, and so,' sh' she, 'you'd better go about your business and mind your master's shops;' My! how they did laugh, they seemed to think that a capical joke."

Maria's volubility now began to moderate; for some minutes she remained silent: a paleness overspread her countenance, and she suddenly exclaimed, "Cou'd'e my lady,

let

let me sit that side — lor I'm so sick — 'tis riding backerds, oh, dear quick," added Maria hustling herself between Lady Aucherly and Caroline, which obliged the latter to take the opposite seat, while Lady Aucherly had the mortification of having Maria Grimshaw at her side the rest of the way, and of meeting a variety of friends to witness her situation, notwithstanding she took the precaution of avoiding the park.

"Oh laws, I'm sorry I made 'e move; you see, Miss Archerly, we went to a grand supper last night, and I ate so many nice things, selly-bub, pickle-salmon, rasberry-cream, baked peers and what not — 'twas too much on't — I s'pose this ride has jumbled 'em all together and set 'em a quarrelling, ha! ha! I'm better now; but I don't expect I shall be well before I'm wuss."

"Oh, well, now my lady," continued Maria, as they passed Hyde Park Corner, I on't intrude no further, and I'm sure I owe 'e many thanks for this lift; I can get out at the first stand o'coaches."

This hint only anticipated Lady Aucherly's

intention: the carriage was stopt, and a servant was assisting Maria to alight, when the horses took a fancy to move a few paces forwards, by which means Maria was thrown off her balance, and receiving a knock on her kibed heel, she fell with a shriek on her knees. Several persons ran to her assistance: Maria however had suffered no material injury, and was soon placed in a hackney coach, from which vehicle, she popt out her head screaming for her little "passel;" but the barouche was many yards before her.

"I say coachman, you follor that there carriage: they got summut of mine — d'ye hear — make haste."

The coachman did as he was directed, and keeping the barouche in his eye, pursued its course with little chance of accomplishing his orders, had it not stopt at Shawford's, where a partyof fashionables were lounging: two of the gentlemen came out of the shop to speak to Lady Aucherly, who gave her orders from the carriage.

"Won't your ladyship alight," said the

Marquis

Marquis of Haughton; "the De Courtlands are here; we've been having turtle—"

"We are not acquainted—"

"They are very handsome," said Caroline.

"Lady Matilda is the best figure," observed Lord Starfort; "but they are all beauties; indeed I never remember so many fine women in London as at present—the Maxwells—the Bentleys—"

"And the adorable O'Connor," said the marquis, "whom you think so like Lady Cecilia."

"Infinitely superior in my judgment—"

"Their expression," said Lady Aucherly, "is very different—Miss O'Connor has undoubtedly the preference—in a question of beauty, my Lord Starfort's taste can never be disputed."

"Pray" said Caroline "is that Lady Matilda De Courtland talking to Major Sykes?"

"No, that's Haughton's sister, Lady Honoria Gordon; she's just come from Edinburgh, where she has been all the rage—"

Maria's

Maria's hack now drove up alongside the barouche.

"Oh my lady, I'm so sorry — but there's summut of mine, a little passel, I left on the seat."

The footman searched the carriage: it was not to be found.

"Oh lor, don't you tell me 'tain't there, sir — lor it's given me such a turn, I declare it makes me quite fainty —"

"It's certainly some mistake madam," said Lady Aucherly, "there can be nothing of yours —"

"Laws!" cried Maria with half her body out of the coach window; "when 'tis but a minute ago as I left it there — don't you recollect, Miss Archerly, when I was sick, and chang'd sides with'e, I said my little passel might bide where it 'twas, and you said, says you, you dare say'd, sitting backerds wou'dn't make the passel sick; those were your very words."

"This young woman, marquis, is certainly deranged in her intellects," said Lady Aucherly, observing the ladies lingering in the

the shop, and busily employing their eye-glasses: "We must endeavour to pacify her by humouring her fancies. We'll take care, madam, to have a strict search made, and if any thing is found belonging to you, it shall be taken care of."

"Oh laws, Lady Archerly, don't you think to fob me off so—I want my things—I must have 'em to wear to-night at Mrs. Tustin's—this'll never do, I must get out and look for 'em myself; I won't be put upon, nor bamboozled by nobody."

"I must request," said Lady Aucherly, "the interference of some gentleman to send this person away."

"Coachman, drive off," cried Major Sykes.

"Oh sir, you daren't order my coach away, I've as good a right to stop here as any lady in the land—coachman you stir if you dare—I will have my things; you'll put me in a passion, for I won't be chous'd out of 'em, without making a stir, I can promise'e; so now, Lady Archerly, you'd better give 'em up, without making more

fuss,

fuss, for I must and will have 'em—it's very hard, after we was so friendly but now—and Miss Archerly, I say Miss Archerly, you don't care a bit for one now, 'cause you got your fops about'e—what *shall* I do! goodness; I shall go distracted. Do'e sir," continued Maria, addressing the footman, "pray do'e look again—my lady, do'e rise a bit—can't'e find it, sir?—look 'tother side—behind the cushion, oh law, you've found it, lars lov'e, you're my best friend—but I knew it must be somewhere there; lorks—how 'tis squatted—I'm sure I'm sorry, Lady Archerly, to have given'e all so much trouble, but 'twould a been tormenting to have lost it, I got a parl sprays there's wuth three guineas—good by'e my lady, good by'e Miss Archerly. I say, coachman, now drive where I told'e you know."

Lady Aucherly affected to laugh off this mortifying adventure. "A whimsical treat for you marquis—an incomparable exhibition of the ridiculous; I'm sure, Caroline, the poor creature was entirely ignorant of the motive of humanity that prompted us to

take

take her in the carriage — I little expected such a scene."

"Pray" said the marquis, looking very archly, "is she not the same lady who was of your party a year or two ago in Bond-street—people said 'twas one of your nieces; that, I denied; then they would have it, she was a cousin, and of course I could not give a decisive negative — cousinship embraces so wide a field, we may all of us have cousins, for any thing we know, equally as entertaining as this unique."

"I recollect," replied Lady Aucherly, calling forth all her vivacity, "you were particularly taken with her voice; my Lord Starfort, did you ever hear the marquis's imitations; Major Sykes has? No! then do ask him to give us a specimen, he will do ample justice to his fair original — come marquis, imagine a *parl* spray in jeopardy— well, if you will be obstinate, I shall not wait; to Harley-street, John;—but remember marquis to con over the scene, and the first good opportunity," added Lady Aucherly,

cherly, as the barouche drove off, "you shall give it to us in complete style."

"Excellent spirits!" cried the marquis, shrugging his shoulders, "but she feels cursedly sore about it."

"But who was that odd woman," enquired Lady Augusta De Courtland, "*was* she a cousin?"

"I cannot say, but I believe she's only one of those troublesome acquaintance, that intrude their company at the most unseasonable times."

They all gave great credit to Lady Aucherly for the good grace with which she carried off so awkward a rencontre, though their animadversions on it, occasioned them much pleasantry.

Lady Aucherly was at a loss to account for various messages, which were sent the next day to enquire how her ladyship and Miss Aucherly were after "the accident;"

the

the following statement however, among fashionable anecdotes in the Morning Post, evidently from no friendly pen, explained the matter:

"*The Dowager Lady Aucherly and her daughter paid a visit yesterday to their relations at Hammersmith; and on their return home with a young friend of her ladyship's the horses took fright in Piccadilly, near Park-lane, and unluckily, at the very moment the young lady was alighting from the carriage, she was thrown with violence into the street, and received some severe bruises about her hips. Lady and Miss Aucherly fainted through terror; the young lady was replaced in the barouche, and conveyed to her ladyship's house, where Lady Aucherly watches over her with the tenderest solicitude.*

"*We have since heard the young lady is a Miss Grimshaw, one of the daughters of T. G. sugar-refiner, Aldersgate-street.*"

Provoked at the promulgation of so daring a falsehood, Lady Aucherly gave orders to Mrs. St. Clair's porter, to contradict the account, and immediately dispatched a paragraph

graph to the principal papers, stating, that the elegant mansion of Lord Belmont, in Piccadilly, was now fitting up for the reception of Lady Aucherly; that considerable alterations had been made in the suite of apartments, and that the furniture would be after the most correct Grecian models. That her ladyship and her beautiful daughter were at present on a visit to Mrs. St. Clair; that their removal to Piccadilly would not take place till March, when the fashionable world might again expect those elegant entertainments for which her ladyship was so deservedly celebrated.

The *eclât* which the promise of festivity gave Lady Aucherly, silenced the voice of ridicule among the many; but there were those, who would not relinquish a present enjoyment for future prospects: these, openly congratulated her ladyship on her miraculous escape from being overturned, and concluded her young friend was much better, by seeing her ladyship out; and, "I'm very glad," added Mrs. Monckton, "your ladyship has not suffered from your kind attention to her."

Lady Aucherly smiled, and began an explanation.

"Ah, I know merit will never hear its own praises," interrupted Mrs. Monckton, as she walked off to join the Marchioness of Arrangford, who was entertaining a party with a minute account of all she had collected on the subject, and much more from her own prolific invention.

"Good G—d, my dear Lady Aucherly," cried Mrs. Smith-Bouverie, "what a ridiculous story this is they have got about you — ah, I know it's all a lie, but—"

"Oh, but I assure you," said Lady Devereux, "there were very good grounds for the newspaper accounts; the young lady *was* thrown out of the carriage, that's certain — I know several who saw it; Sir John Mellish was one."

"So far may be true," returned Lady Aucherly, "but I have no pretensions to the commendations bestowed on me for attending this unfortunate heroine."

"No, certainly; nobody thinks you took her home, because you know she followed you

you to Shawford's — Oh, you'd die of laughter Mr. Drax, if you were to hear Lord Haughton: He gave us the account at the Maxwells', — in his droll way, mimicking the lady's voice — and the Bentleys were there, and furnished many curious additions; they passed you at Hammersmith, surrounded by a dozen wood nymphs — I can't remember half the odd things I've heard."

"Ah there are so many different accounts," said Mrs. Methuen, "that I despair of getting at the rights of it: I declare its shameful of the Morning Post to make up such a story, it must be very provoking to you."

"Oh, yes," cried Mrs. Mansell, "and I'm sure I'm so sorry, like."

"It provokes my laughter," observed Lady Aucherly gaily, "it has no further power."

"Of course," returned Mrs. Methuen; "but I want to hear some connected detail."

"Lord Haughton gives the best," said Lady Devereux, he begins as far back

back as—let me see, he imitates one of these ladies, calling you 'Aunt Simmons,' at a Clifton ball — next follow, adventures in Bond-street, where he had the misfortune to throw one of them down — then the marchioness supplies a vacancy in the narrative, with a most ludicrous account of a visit, the whole family of these Grimshaws paid you, ha ! ha ! ha ! it made such a laugh."

"I hope Miss G.'s better," said the Countess of Hillingdon *en passant*, adding in a whisper, "you should have fee'd all the papers the moment you arrived in town."

However irritating these remarks were, they were on a subject too absurd to give Lady Aucherly serious uneasiness; yet for the time, it required no little exertion, to set at defiance the shafts of ridicule.

Her mind was much more occupied with an important object she had in view; every possible means were devised to eradicate Caroline's attachment to Harry Grosvenor. A round of dissipation was considered as best calculated to accomplish this desirable end, and as he was in a distant part of England,

land there was no fear of their meeting. With regard to her son, she had less prospect of success; she knew his affection for Emily was as ardent as ever, and she was convinced nothing but some cause on Emily's part would occasion a change in his sentiments.

CHAPTER X.

The Dénouement.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since Lady Aucherly had learnt Mrs. Hastings' address, but her intended visit was forgotten in a variety of engagements and busy projects: it might have been longer deferred, had it not been brought to her recollection, at a time which interfered with no other pursuit, On returning home from Mrs. Macmaurice's where she had not been admitted, she passed through Duke-street—she had an hour on her hands, and she knew not how she could better employ it, than in calling on her long-forgotten friend.

She was shewn into a parlour on the ground floor, and after waiting a short time Mrs. Hastings made her appearance.

The difference in their rank at first occasioned some embarrassment, which the engaging manners of Lady Aucherly speedily dissipated. They had parted more than twenty years ago, both beautiful; enjoying the blessings of health and looking forwards to happy prospects — under what different circumstances did they now meet. With respect to Lady Aucherly, these advantages were but little diminished, and surrounded by affluence, she was regarded by the world as one of fortune's favourites; while her friend appeared under the chilling pressure of dependence, and in health, too visibly impaired, not to excite Lady Aucherly's tenderest sympathy.

Mrs. Hastings briefly related her affecting story, and on Lady Aucherly's expressing her concern at her altered looks, she replied, "my health is extremely delicate and I fear it has suffered lately from my attendance on a sick chamber; a friend of Mrs. Lovell's

Lovell's is here, who is recently returned from the West-Indies with a broken constitution. I fear he cannot recover."

"And does Mrs. Lovell reside here too?"

"Not at present; Mr. O'Connor occupies her apartment."

"O'Connor!—a relation, I presume of Mrs. Lovell's *elève*."

"No, I believe not; he was acquainted with Mrs. Lovell in the West-Indies, and on her settling in England, he prevailed on her to bring up his ward, Miss O'Connor, who was at that time very young; but I apprehend no relationship subsists between them."

"It's rather remarkable," observed Lady Aucherly, "for though Mrs. Lovell has carefully avoided satisfying the curiosity of our neighbourhood in Devonshire respecting Emily's family, enough has escaped to make it evident that the authors of her birth are unknown to her. Now, if Mr. O'Connor were her father, the same motive which required the concealment of that circumstance, would have suggested the policy of her bearing a different name."

"Undoubtedly — but I understand, Mr. O'Connor was the confidential friend of Emily's father, and there were family reasons for the concealment of her real name. He arrived in England last Autumn, and came here to make enquiries after Mrs. Lovell, who was then at Compton-Stoke; he expressed a great desire to reside here till Mrs. Lovell's return, and Mrs. Milner was prevailed on to accommodate him, particularly as Mrs. Lovell, to whom my aunt wrote on the subject, very earnestly seconded his request. At that time, he appeared in a convalescent state, but poor man, on Mrs. Lovell's arrival, she found him so ill, she would not suffer him to be removed."

Lady Aucherly listened with much interest to this account. The reasons alledged for Emily's assumed name, were of a nature too suspicious not to impress her with the conviction that Emily was the natural child either of O'Connor, or his friend: this however, she knew would have little influence on her son's mind; but she hoped there were other circumstances, that might, in her

hands,

hands, become of the utmost importance; she was anxious therefore to collect every information respecting Emily's birth, and conceiving Mrs. Hastings might probably know more than she had at first thought fit to communicate, Lady Aucherly continued the subject, and assuming such a tone, looks, and manners as she thought most calculated to encourage confidence, she observed, that Emily appeared to be a most amiable and deserving young woman, and placed in a very unfortunate situation.

"Unfortunate, certainly," returned Mrs. Hastings, "so far as regards the loss of natural protectors, but most fortunate in having found the best of friends in Mrs. Lovell."

"True—for how many hapless young women, deprived of parental care, have fallen early victims to ungenerous seduction."

"Alas!" replied Mrs. Hastings, "the world is so depraved, that while the unprotected female, who has been betrayed into guilt by the vilest art, is shunned, deserted, and despised, the destroyer of innocence is

still allowed to maintain his place in society."

"People are too apt to be precipitate in their decisions," returned Lady Aucherly, "a woman who has yielded to her lover's protestations of honourable intentions, is too frequently accused of being as much in fault as her perfidious seducer — they do not picture to themselves an innocent blooming girl, full of health and spirits, little dreaming what a wretched fate awaits her, launched unprotected on the world — her beauty attracts the eye of some military Adonis — a man of insinuating address, and long practised in the art of seduction: in *her* eyes, he appears every thing amiable; he breathes vows of love and constancy — what does nature whisper to her — her uninformed, inexperienced mind views not the crime in colours so dark as those with which civil society has clothed it; she calculates not its fatal consequences — her lover knows them all: yet with cool deliberate villainy, he watches every opportunity favourable to his designs, till at length one more is added to the

list

list of wretched outcasts — the unhappy life she is afterwards compelled to lead, bad example, and the hopelessness of redeeming her character, must plead in extenuation of subsequent misconduct."

"The dread, too" added Mrs. Hastings, "of being driven to such a life of infamy, certainly induces many a wretched mother to conceal her shame by the greater crime of murder. Can it for a moment be doubted, that in the eye of Heaven, her seducer is in some degree responsible for her offence—yet how few men are there, who reflect on the injustice, cruelty, and guilt of giving life to beings, whom, by nature, they are bound to protect, but whom they unfeelingly desert to whatever fate may chance to overtake them: Emily however has experienced a happier lot."

"The uncertain fate of my own child," continued Mrs. Hastings, in a tone which seemed to express all she had suffered, "preys continually on my mind: frequent incidents have occurred, which have given rise to transient hopes of her being restored

to me. When I learnt that Mrs. Lovell was ignorant who Emily's parents were, my heart throbb'd with maternal solicitude that she might prove my lost child—it was too impiobable—yet for a while I indulged the hope, and anxiously questioned Mrs. Lovell: oh, how eagerly did I cherish every uncertainty that hung over the tale, but her mother's picture—"

"Do you then know her story?"

"Enough, alas, to satisfy me I must relinquish the fond hopes I had indulged. She is, I understand, the daughter of respectable parents, who are now no more. Circumstances of a peculiar nature and with which I am unacquainted, deprived her of her parents' protection, and denied them the gratification of seeing their infant brought up under their own care—but they had too great a regard for their child, too just a sense of their duty to leave her to chance; and though a veil of mystery appears to envelope her origin, she is certainly placed in as happy a condition as one under such circumstances could hope for." Mrs. Lovell

has

has shewn herself the valuable friend, the affectionate mother; she has frequently been here to see Mr. O'Connor, and perhaps entertains a hope that she may prevail on him to disclose the names of Emily's parents—Emily came with her this morning, and I believe they are still with him."

Lady Aucherly wishing to avoid meeting Mrs. Lovell, observed, she feared she had detained Mrs. Hastings, and hoping very soon to have the pleasure of repeating her visit, took leave.

Mrs. Lovell had been some time with O'Connor, before she introduced Emily to him; she perceived he was not equal to the interview, and was preparing to leave him, when Mrs. Hastings returned. He was then apparently dosing, and Mrs. Hastings detained them a few minutes, while she told them of the visit she had just received; she spoke in the highest terms of Lady Aucherly, and expressed how much she felt gratified by the kindness of her manner. Mrs. Lovell and Emily gave their assent to her remarks, though the former secretly felt that her lady-

ship

ship owed much to a skilful use of talents, which enabled her to please whenever she thought it worth while.

As Mrs. Lovell and Emily were leaving the house, Colonel Macmaurice was approaching towards it; as he passed Emily at the door, he bowed with a look of inquisitive anxiety, and he entered O'Connor's chamber with sensations not to be defined.

Mrs. Hastings, who was sitting at the bed-side, rose at his entrance, and passing through another door, left them together.

"How are you, O'Connor—"

"Who is that?"

"'Tis your friend, Hastings Macmaurice."

O'Connor groaned.—"Do you know who left the room?"

"No."

"Emily's mother!"

Colonel Macmaurice turned pale, and fixing his dark eyes on the death-like countenance of O'Connor, he read there, *remorse.* Fear took possession of his soul. Dennis O'Connor, the accomplice of his villainy, and the

the widow of Frederick Hastings, under the same roof! He had met the injured Emily too, coming from the house—what but a disclosure of his guilt could have brought them together! These reflections passed in an instant through the distracted mind of Macmaurice. He traversed the room with indescribable agitation, "I am betrayed then!" exclaimed he, striking his forehead, and regarding O'Connor with suspicion and contempt.

O'Connor paused, considering in what way to answer, so as neither to undeceive, nor directly to assure him that his villainy was yet a secret. He felt himself slighted by the colonel: his health had obliged him to quit Jamaica, and on his arrival in the same country with Macmaurice, and in the same city, he had sent to let him know there was such a person in existence. The name was hateful to the ears of Macmaurice; it recalled a transaction, he wished for ever buried in oblivion: his time too, was occupied in preparing for his defence at the approaching trial, and from day to day he put off

off calling on O'Connor, who at length began to conjecture that the colonel meant entirely to neglect him. It was impossible not to feel resentment; but O'Connor was actuated by a worthier motive: reviewing his past life with the deepest contrition, and hoping to awaken in Macmaurice a just sense of his guilt, he suffered him to remain awhile in suspense. His silence was regarded by Macmaurice as confirming his suspicions, and yielding to the impulse of an angry temper, he broke out in bitter invective, reproaching O'Connor in harsh terms, with breach of promise and pusillanimity: the physician opportunely entering, put a stop to the noise, and obliged the colonel to retire.

O'Connor's mind was torn with anguish, but the impotent rage of Macmaurice affected him not: for many long years had he eudeavoured to quiet the appeals of conscience, by the same sophistry, which had at first overcome his scruples; but the dark transaction was for ever before him: with his declining health, his reflections became more painful, and now on the verge of eternity,

nity, he shrunk from the recollection of his crime with horror.

What were Macmaurice's feelings: hardened in his guilt, his thoughts were directed only to the means of concealing it. His early life had been marked by profligacy, and inheriting his mother's ambition, he had while yet a boy, regarded Frederick Hastings as the hated obstacle to his hopes: his heart bounded with joy when the news of the fatal accident reached him, and he once more anticipated the time which would make him master of Castle Hastings. He questioned the servant, who had been dispatched to town for surgical assistance, relative to his master's danger, and the man incautiously mentioning by whom his master was attended, Macmaurice artfully extracted from him all he knew of Frederick's connexion with Laura. His hopes were again baffled when he heard there was another obstacle in his way—Frederick's infant child—he mused upon a scheme for freeing himself of such an unwelcome intruder: the feelings of the unfortunate mother were not once re-

garded,

garded, and as to the fraud he meditated, he endeavoured by specious arguments to persuade himself that he had a prior right; that the child might be provided for, without its ever knowing the loss it would sustain. He at first admitted the idea, as a visionary speculation; then as a practicable and even justifiable expedient for obtaining what he now considered his natural inheritance, and by degrees, the subject became so familiar, that losing sight of justice and humanity, he only deliberated on the best means of accomplishing his iniquitous scheme: the success of it, however, depended on the death of his uncle, which was now daily expected; various circumstances conspired to favour his atrocious design, and he resolved that the first information of Frederick's death should be the signal for putting it into execution.

An accomplice however was indispensible. Dennis O'Connor, a dissipated character, the companion of Macmaurice in his extravagant and vicious career, had been obliged, through losses at play, to sell his commission. This man, who then lived in

extreme

extreme indigence, harrassed by arrests, and every day threatened with a jail, Macmaurice found means to engage in his service.

O'Connor heard the proposal with some compunction, but his distresses blunted his feelings, and he yielded to the power of argument, and the temptation of gold.

Having arranged his plans, Macmaurice, to prevent suspicion, set out to see his dying relation: he affected surprize to find him attended by Laura, and assumed so friendly a disposition, that Frederick was induced to confide his marriage to him. Macmaurice promised protection to the lovely Laura, and when Frederick breathed his last, dispatched a messenger to the trusty Dennis, who with little difficulty prevailed on the nurse to commit the child to his care.

The scheme succeeded, and so well did Macmaurice dissemble, that instead of being suspected as the instigator of an act so inhuman, he was regarded as a friend and protector.

The death of a beloved husband had such an effect on the delicate frame of Laura, that

that it occasioned a derangement of intellect, and it was the colonel's policy that she should be informed of the loss of her child, at a time most likely to render her disorder permanent. He was nevertheless constant in his enquiries after her health, and carried on the farçe of friendship so long as it served his purpose: his professional duties at length relieved him from his irksome disguise, and in the course of the following year, he succeeded to his grandfather's possessions.

O'Connor carried the child into Wales, and leaving it under the care of a woman with a sum of money for its support, he went to Jamaica to look after some small property he had in the neighbourhood of Mr. Lovell's estate. Colonel Macmaurice's liberality enabled O'Connor successfully to investigate his claim to the property in question, which proved to be more valuable than he expected, and being supplied with the means of improving his estate, he in a few years become possessed of a considerable fortune; but in the midst of his affluence, the

the defrauded orphan was ever present to his mind.

Various plans were formed for her advantage, but none seemed eligible, till hearing of Mrs. Lovell's intention of settling in England, O'Connor was struck with the idea of placing the little girl under her care: this met the approbation of Colonel Macmaurice, and a plan was afterwards concerted between them, for securing to Emily a permanent protectress in Mrs. Lovell; for trusting to her benevolence, such a tale was invented as wa well calculated to induce her not to desert a friendless child.

Every caution now appeared to have been adopted for concealing the identity of the child, and Macmaurice no longer suffered anxiety. The girl who had so wickedly betrayed her trust was dead; O'Connor alone was privy to his guilt, and the share he had in it, Macmaurice regarded as his security, till he beheld him on a bed of sickness, pale and emaciated, with a countenance deeply impressed with grief and penitence: his confidence then forsook him, and understanding

standing fron the physician that there were no hopes of O'Connor's recovery, his agitation increased, and he left the house filled with the most alarming apprehensions.

O'Connor's mind fluctuated between a sense of justice, and the shame of confessing himself the slave of Macmaurice's treachery. He became an inmate at Mrs. Milner's, without knowing that Mrs. Hastings lived there: they were strangers to each other—the name however was sufficient to awaken his suspicions: he was cautious in his enquiries, and had the satisfaction to ascertain that the circumstance of Mrs. Lovell's having resided there, was the result of accident. His feelings at first prompted him to seek other lodgings, but the desire of learning many interesting particulars respecting Emily, which Mrs. Milner was able to give him, detained him where he was.

Mrs. Hastings he seldom saw; but when a severe relapse threatened a fatal termination to his complaints, her innate benevolence prompted her to offer her constant attendance, and the unhappy O'Connor suffered

a pang

a pang with every act of kindness: he was miserable while he delayed rendering her all the justice in his power, yet he wanted fortitude to reveal the important secret, and when Mrs Lovell presented Emily to him, he believed that an over-ruling Providence had summoned the injured orphan to receive justice from him on his death bed. He was unprepared for the meeting; he shrunk from her gaze, and turned aside his head to conceal his emotions—he attempted to speak; his voice failed him, and he sank exhausted on his pillow.

Mrs Lovell had planned the visit, in the hope that Emily might obtain from O'Connor what he had ever denied to her solicitations, but perceiving how much her presence distressed him, she forebore touching on the subject, particularly, as from long habit, she was without suspicion of his being able to disclose any secret of more importance than the names merely, of Emily's parents, both of whom, she believed were dead; but on her return home, she reflected on his conduct,

duct, and was convinced something of greater moment weighed on his mind.

In the meantime, Colonel Macmaurice, harrassed by suspicions, was anxious to receive from O'Connor an assurance that he had not betrayed him, and in the evening he again called at Mrs. Milner's. O'Connor was considered better, but he was then asleep, and Macmaurice was obliged to endure another interval of suspence.

The next morning he awoke from his disturbed slumbers, to reflections still more unwelcome: an interview with O'Connor was uppermost in his thoughts, but some regimental business which could not be deferred, occupied his time the greater part of the morning, and it was near three o'clock when he reached Mrs. Milner's.

"How is Mr. O'Connor?" enquired Macmaurice of a female servant, who opened the door.

"He's dead, sir."

Macmaurice, the haughty, the unfeeling, the guilty Macmaurice stood appalled:— "dead!" he exclaimed, in a voice that bespoke

spoke the perturbation of his mind: "dead! when — God! — did he enquire for me? — has any one been with him? —"

Alarmed at his agitated manner, the girl fled from the door, while Macmaurice still lingered on the threshold, hesitating whether to quit the house immediately, or seek to know the worst at once—he had not courage to learn his fate, and returned home sunk in the most gloomy despondency.

His son Arthur soon afterwards brought him some information respecting his court-martial, which was to be held the next day; and while he was conferring with him on this hateful subject, Mr. Dorrington was announced.

They were not personally acquainted: the colonel read something extraordinary in Mr. Dorrington's countenance, and with the most fearful forebodings waited his speaking.

"I wish, sir, to have a few minutes conversation with you," said Mr. Dorrington, "if you have leisure."

"I am

"I am disengaged, sir,—pray be seated—this is one of my sons."

"I would rather our conference should be in private, colonel."

"Arthur, I'll thank you to leave us."

Mr. Dorrington's visit was occasioned by a confession which O'Connor had that morning made. His complaints had taken an unfavourable turn in the night, and in the morning he was considerably worse: believing he had not long to live, he would not suffer Mrs. Hastings to leave him, and requested Mrs. Lovell and Emily might be sent for at an early hour.

"How are you?" said Mrs. Lovell, kindly taking his hand.

"I am past relief in this world," replied O'Connor, in broken accents—"but I shall die in peace, when I have unburthened my mind of the weight of—guilt—oh, Mrs. Lovell, you have often urged me to tell you the names of Emily's parents—I will tell you more—one of them yet lives—Mrs. Hastings, you lost a child—Emily a mother—guess the rest,

rest, and spare me the confession of a crime, I now hold in abhorrence."

The emotions of Emily and her mother may be better imagined than described.

When they were sufficiently composed to hear further particulars, O'Connor briefly stated some circumstances that required explanation — "in that pocket-book there is a letter — read it, Mrs. Lovell."

"Is it not the same you wrote me from Jamaica, apprizing me of the death of Emily's supposititious father?"

"It is — but it was penned by Colonel Macmaurice, to give a further colour to the deception — and it was at his suggestion the letter was accompanied by those pretended memorials of affection — He sent them to me from England — on the other side, is his letter to me on the subject."

Mrs. Lovell was too prudent not to consult some friend on this occasion, in order to see Emily's claims protected: she lost no time in making Mr, Dorrington acquainted with the important discovery, and he accom-

panied her to Mrs. Milner's, and took such precautions in preserving O'Connor's testimony, as would secure to Emily the restoration of her rights.

When Mr. Dorrington called on Colonel Macmaurice, he was not apprized of O'Connor's death, and judging it advisable to make his appeal on Emily's behalf, while there was a living witness to support it, he was determined that no delay on his part, should be the means of weakening her claims.

The two gentlemen being left together, Mr. Dorrington delicately opened the subject of his visit, and proceeded to state the narrative O'Connor had given.

Colonel Macmaurice was too impatient to hear him out; he declared the whole was a fabrication—that O'Connor was one of the greatest villains that ever lived, and had treated him with the blackest ingratitude.—That he had often done him the most important services, but that having at length refused an unreasonable request, he had incurred his resentment—"thus it is,"

continued

continued the colonel, "in befriending the unworthy, if we do not accede to *all* they require, our former acts of kindness are despised, and instead of being gratefully remembered, serve only to excite hatred.— There are too many thus depraved—this O'Connor, sir, is one; he cannot bear to feel an obligation, and to revenge himself, has thus basely slandered his benefactor."

Mr. Dorrington permitted him to proceed without interruption, and perceiving the colonel was endeavouring to evade an immediate answer, he observed, that he did not wish to take him by surprize—he had called himself, that the colonel might be convinced that it was not his intention to spread a report injurious to his character, and requested him to consider the subject in its most serious light, and he would call on him the following day with such proofs of O'Connor's story, as would be sufficient to satisfy him; it would be more for his advantage to accommodate the affair, than by compelling the injured Emily to have recourse to a court of justice, "in which," added Mr. Dorrington,

ton, "she will not want the assistance of powerful friends."

Macmaurice remained a few moments in sullen silence; a stupor seemed to overcome his faculties; then in a low, hurried voice, he replied, "I know there are circumstances attending the loss of the child alluded to, which may give an air of credibility to the tale O'Connor has invented—it would perhaps," continued the colonel assuming more spirit, "be impolitic in me to brave the decision of a court of justice, from which, however innocent a man may be, he seldom returns free from all suspicion—some unfavourable impressions against him are always excited—if you will allow me, Mr. Dorrington, to inspect the documents by which you propose to make out your claim, it may enable me to convince you of O'Connor's villainy—in the meantime, I will consider in what way this unpleasant business may be best adjusted—my time is now necessarily, much occupied—in a few days I shall be at leisure to give this matter a further discussion."

Mr. Dorrington readily acquiesced, and left Macmaurice to his own bitter reflections, well satisfied that O'Connor's statement could not be controverted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE wretched Macmaurice, on the brink of being publicly exposed, had scarcely fortitude sufficient to go through the forms of his trial—he was found guilty and dismissed His Majesty's service, with every mark of disgrace. Such an accumulation of evils was more than he could support, and in a fit of frenzied despair, he put an end to his miserable existence.

This event was severely felt by his family and near connexions, and for a while deterred Mr. Dorrington from pursuing the business he had undertaken. It now required more form: Captain Macmaurice was at first resolute

solute in resisting what he regarded as a shallow scheme for wresting from him his lawful inheritance, but on a further investigation of the business, he found the claimant was in possession of proofs too strong for opposition, and considering too, the infamy that would attach to the name of Macmaurice, should the charges against the colonel be substantiated, he judged it most politic to make terms with the heiress of Castle Hastings; and it was agreed that on his putting her in possession of the estates in question, she should, on her part, relinquish all demands for arrears in rent; and Emily, with a liberality and generosity not often met with determined on her coming of age, to make over to her cousin some landed property which was detached from Castle Hastings.

Colonel Macmaurice's affairs proved to be deeply involved; an ample provision, however, had been fortunately secured to his widow, but her wounded spirit needed the solace of retirement, and she readily accepted an invitation from Mrs. Grosvenor, whose abode was as secluded as Mrs. Macmaurice

 could

could desire. It was situated in a romantic part of the Isle of Wight, commanding extensive and varied prospects of the English Channel: the house was in the cottage style, but the interior was more nearly allied to the modern villa. The cause which had influenced the proprietor in relinquishing it, recommended it to Mrs. Grosvenor—it's simple retirement.

Mrs. Grosvenor had been spoilt by luxury and indulgence, but she was no sooner obliged to enter on a different mode of life, than she endeavoured to the utmost of her power to make herself and her family happy and contented. No situation could have been better calculated to sooth Mrs. Macmaurice's feelings, and by degrees she recovered that serenity of mind, which at first appeared for ever banished.

The extent of Colonel Macmaurice's villainy was concealed as much as possible from the public, and a story was circulated to account for the change in Emily's name, and her accession to a large fortune.

Those persons who thought Emily O'Con-

nor handsome, pronounced Emily Hastings divine, and those who had before passed over her charms with cold indifference now acknowledged her to be much improved.—While Fortune thus influenced the minds of others, she herself preserved the same unassuming manners and ingenuous simplicity that had ever distinguished her.

Her first wish was to secure to her mother a handsome independence, and to evince her attachment to Mrs. Lovell, by insisting on her participating in her good fortune: but Mr. O'Connor's will had in some measure rendered Emily's generous intentions unnecessary; to Mrs. Lovell, among other friends, he bequeathed a considerable legacy, and the greatest part of his fortune was divided between Emily and her mother.

A principal objection to Sir William's union with Emily being now removed, Lady Aucherly was among the first to offer her congratulations, and in the warmest terms expressed the happiness she felt in the prospect of her son's marriage with so amiable a young woman; indeed, Emily had always

been a favorite with Lady Aucherly, though her ambition had aimed at her son's forming an alliance with some family of distinction, but the point being now settled, she was eager to display Emily's charms to the best advantage.

As soon as she was settled in Piccadilly, she insisted on Mrs. Hastings' and Emily's spending much of their time with her: it was with real pleasure she introduced them to her friends, and Mrs. Hastings experiencing better health with returning spirits, excited general interest.

William was transported with joy to find his mother so ready to promote his wishes, and impatient to call the interesting Emily his own, would consent to no longer postponement of his happiness than his next birth-day, when he would be of age.

The joyful day at length arrived: the ceremony was performed by special licence in Cavendish-square; Mr. Dorrington gave Emily away, and Caroline and Henrietta were her bride maids.

Immediately after the ceremony, Sir William

liam and his lovely bride set off for Devonshire, and were greeted at East Compton by the ringing of bells, and every mark of an attached tenantry. Gratified by their attentions, and solicitous that all around him should partake of his felicity, Sir William ordered an entertainment to be prepared for them the following day, and a general invitation was given to all the neighbourhood.

Lady Aucherly and Caroline, accompanied by Mrs. Hastings, arrived shortly afterwards, and Mrs. Lovell being at Compton Stoke with the Dorrington family, completed the happy circle: but there was one who sighed in secret. Not all the gaieties of the metropolis, nor the flattering attentions of men of rank, had power to render Caroline indifferent to Harry Grosvenor. Many months had elapsed since she had seen him, but absence had in no wise diminished her attachment. She had been disappointed in not meeting him in London, and though she knew the strict enforcement of military orders made it difficult for officers to obtain leave of absence, yet a sigh would not un-

frequently steal from her bosom, at the idea that Henry might have found other attractions. She had, from a sense of propriety, forbid his correspondence; she now half repented, and felt some little degree of pique that Henry had not ventured to trespass on her prohibition.

While imaginary fears intruded on Caroline's peace, Henry suffered alarm on grounds scarcely more reasonable: she heard not of him, further than by an accidental paragraph in a newspaper, which informed her that his regiment had been reviewed by the commanding officer of the district: but through the same medium, Henry had heard frequently of Caroline. He saw her name among the fashionables at the most distinguished assemblies in town, and often with such high encomiums, that while he felt gratified that the object of his heart should receive the just homage due to her charms, it occasioned him many a jealous pang, and many a time did he ask himself what hope a poor subaltern in a militia could entertain, for one thus courted and admired.

Having

Having once yielded to these impressions the most trifling occurrences were regarded as destruction to his hopes. With a jealous eye he read that Caroline had opened a ball with Lord Algernon de Courtland, that "the dancing after supper was recommenced by Lady Aucherly's lovely daughter and Major Lamotte, to the merry tune of the Honey Moon." Had Henry been a witness of these scenes, he would not have suffered a moment's uneasiness: but distance magnified his fears: he was, however, anxious to meet her, and exerted all his interest to procure leave of absence; but others were equally pressing, and all he could obtain was a promise to be favoured in turn — then some military duty interfered, and when he was again on the point of succeeding in his application, he read an account in the papers of Sir William Aucherly's marriage; of the entertainments given at East Compton, and among the company at Aucherly Park, was his beloved Caroline.

He had no pretence for making his appearance in that neighbourhood, and he was

sufficiently acquainted with the world, to know he had no friend in Lady Aucherly. A few weeks afterwards, he heard Lady Aucherly was at Weymouth; thither he determined to go, and arrived at Stacie's hotel on a ball-night. It was probable Caroline might be there: he hastily dressed himself, and entered the room when the company were at tea; he soon distinguished the object of his affections, and to his great joy, Lady Aucherly was not with her: she was at cards in an adjoining room.

Henry thought it advisable not to introduce himself to Caroline till the tea tables were removing, when their meeting would be less observed; but accident attracted Caroline's eyes to the spot where he stood, and the encouraging smile with which she accompanied her bow, brought him in an instant to her side.

The joy of their meeting was confined to their own bosoms; they durst express no further than the common forms of congratulations between friends. Henry did not know any of Caroline's party, and she

wished to conceal from them how interesting the interview was to her. She was therefore cautious in what she said, but Henry with rapture read all that her eyes expressed, and perceived with no small gratification, that the attentions of an officer of the Stafford were wholly lost upon her.

Henry was now almost daily in Caroline's company; Lady Aucherly was even more courteous than he expected, when after a week spent in this manner, he received unexpected orders to join his regiment immediately—he durst not disobey—and bidding a tender adieu to Caroline, he returned to the north.

The sorrow Caroline suffered at this abrupt departure, was somewhat softened by the sweet conviction of the sincerity of his attachment. She learnt from Henry that his father was expected home in a short time from Jamaica, and she hoped returning prosperity in his affairs would have considerable weight in overcoming her mother's objections: she looked forwards therefore with considerable impatience to Mr. Grosvenor's

venor's return, and in November had the pleasure to hear that he was safely arrived, and had considerably retrieved his embarrassments.

Mr. Grosvenor flew to embrace his wife and children, and having spent some days with them in their retirement, and consulted Mrs. Grosvenor on plans for their future establishment, they prepared for the removal of their family.

It was not advisable for them to reside in the metropolis, but the state of Mr. Grosvenor's affairs requiring him to be frequently in London, he took a house a few miles out of town.

They had not been long settled in their new habitation, before Harry paid them a visit; but there was attraction in London too powerful for him to spend much of his time in the country. He knew most of the families Lady Aucherly visited; and at their houses he had frequent opportunities of seeing Caroline.

Lady Aucherly perceived with pain the influence Harry Grosvenor had obtained

over

over her daughter's affections, and feared any attempt to overcome it would be fruitless while he continued in town. The colonel of Harry's regiment was an old and intimate friend of Lady Aucherly; she did not scruple making him acquainted with her views, and urged the necessity for Henry's return to his regiment as a most desirable step towards breaking off this unfortunate attachment: at Weymouth, her application to Colonel Apreece had proved successful; and she now wrote to him pressing a repetition of this manœuvre: but however willing the colonel might be to oblige Lady Aucherly, it was in this instance no longer in his power, as Harry had in the meantime resigned his commission in the regiment, for one that had been procured for him in the guards.

Lady Aucherly being thus foiled in her project, was obliged to submit to see Caroline at every party engrossed by Harry Grosvenor: she consulted her son on the subject; but his ideas of happiness did not centre in the pleasures resulting from rank

or affluence: he knew Caroline's fortune would be sufficient to afford them every comfort, and satisfied that a sincere attachment subsisted between them, he was too ingenuous to flatter his mother that he should exert his influence with his sister: he promised however to speak to her, and the result was, a conviction that any attempt to alter her sentiments would be fruitless. Lady Aucherly would not give up her point without another effort, and still hoping something might be gained by delay, requested, as the parties were so young, that a twelvemonth might elapse before their marriage took place; but this Harry overruled, and as Henrietta Dorrington was to be married to Sir Charles Wortham before the expiration of the year, he ingeniously urged that as a reason why his own marriage should be no longer deferred; there was no resisting his arguments, and the first of January saw Caroline the wife of Captain Grosvenor of the Guards. Her love for him had been too sincere to be influenced by the plans her mother had adopted, but she yielded to her

allurements

allurements to pleasure, and Mrs. Harry Grosvenor is become a distinguished ornament in the fashionable world.

Ross heard of her marriage on his return to Edinburgh, from a tour among the Orkneys, and stifling a rising sigh at the recollection of his disappointment, he breathed a prayer for her happiness, and in the pursuits of literature, endeavours to overcome his fond regrets.

Mr. and Mrs. Crawley lead a dashing life; some of her sisters are generally with her, and Jessy and Mr. Collier having met at a watering place, he renewed his attentions very successfully: 'tis reported they are soon to be married, and are to *live happy ever afterwards.*

Clarissa has for some time past fancied herself in love with a young merchant, but a gentleman twice as old as herself, having made her an offer, she has been prevailed on by her friends to accept him; and as he is very rich, and cannot be called ugly, they have convinced her she is very happy.

As for the rest, at present there seems very

very little prospect of decreasing the number of spinsters among them; though Major Lethbridge says, they need not despair, for he knew nine plain Miss Mackenzies who all got married, with nothing but good tempers to recommend them; to be sure, he allowed it was a work of time, and he recollected Miss Judith Mackenzie must have passed her grand climacteric before she found a mate; but as the Simmonses, *take them all together*, were good looking girls, and had *pretty fortunes*, they stood a far better chance of doing well.

Mrs. Macmaurice at present continues with the Grosvenors; she has summoned courage to appear in company, and having no wish to retain a name which has made too much noise in the world, she will not, it is supposed, reject the overtures which a general officer has made her.

Charles Macmaurice, having distinguished himself in various engagements, is rapidly advancing in rank, and Maria has the pride of knowing, that his name is never mentioned without the highest encomiums.

Miss Fortescue, after hunting Lord Starfort into matrimony, became disgusted with his capricious humours; and mutually recriminating each other with the folly of marrying, they have agreed to separate.

Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington have the satisfaction of seeing their daughters happily and respectably married, and witness in their exemplary conduct, the advantages of a good education.

Lady Aucherly secretly acknowledged the futility of schemes of aggrandisement: she had never been blindly led by fashion; she perfectly well knew every thing that could be said about vanity, worldly interests, and discharging the duties of domestic life, yet she had not the fortitude to relinquish the admiration of the many, for the praise of the few, and the approbation of her own heart.

A year after William's marriage, Emily presented him with a son, and though Lady Aucherly had too much sense to regret being a grandmother, she did not, it must be confessed, relish the distinction of dowager; she

she was therefore not a little gratified in dropping that title in a second marriage; and as Countess of ——, asserts her claims to fashionable pre-eminence, and exhibits an alluring model of the fascinating combination of natural and artificial elegance; while Emily, in a less conspicuous sphere, presents a bright example of all that is amiable in a daughter, a wife, a mother.

FINIS.

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